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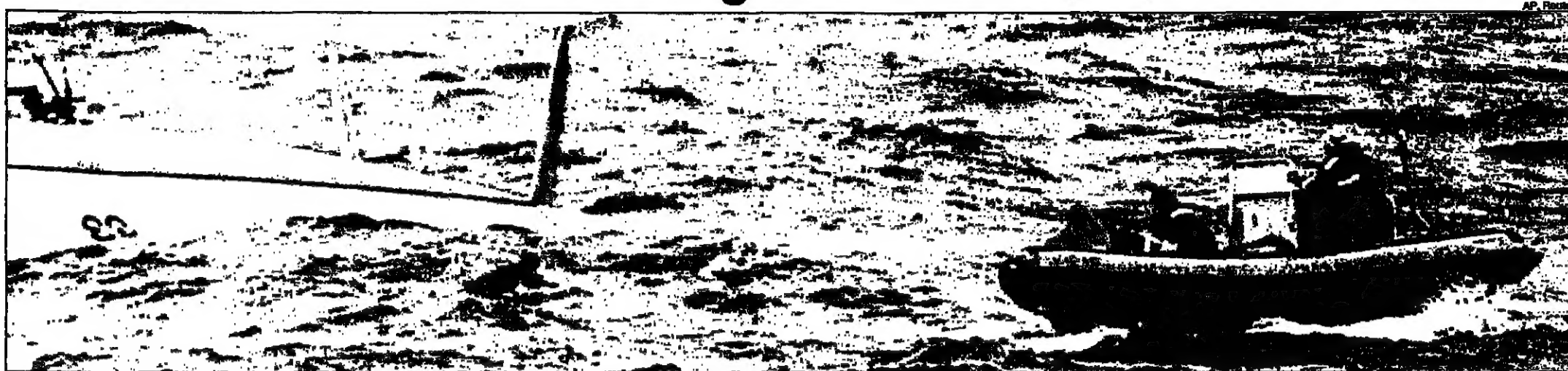
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TOMORROW

ANNE FRANK
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WEEKEND

It's heaven, says rescued sailor



Briton shouted 'I'm coming' as divers knocked

FROM ROGER MAYNARD IN SYDNEY

TONY BULLIMORE was in "absolute heaven" on an Australian frigate last night after one of the greatest survival feats in maritime history. The British sailor had spent nearly five days sheltering in an air pocket in the upturned hull of his yacht before being pulled from the Southern Ocean early yesterday. He had lost the tip of his left little finger and was suffering from minor hypothermia, dehydration and frostbite — but medical staff aboard HMAS Adelaide said that he was relatively unscathed. As he recovered, the Queen sent him a message praising him for his "extraordinary feat of survival". She also congratulated the Australian services for their "dramatic rescue".

The climax to the operation came just as naval divers were preparing to cut a hole in the hull of Mr Bullimore's *Global Exide Challenger*. As the Adelaide reached the yacht and sounded its horn, the six-man crew on an inflatable dinghy jumped on to the hull and started knocking on the surface. Seconds later the noises were returned. "Hello, is there anyone there?" a diver asked. "Hello," came back the lone voice. The divers asked if he could get out and thought he replied "No, I can't." But he then opened the door of the sealed compartment where he had been sleeping and simply swam to the surface. Mr Bullimore, 56, said later that when the diver banged on the hull "I started shouting 'I'm coming, I'm coming'. It took a few seconds to get from one end of the boat to the other. Then I took a few deep breaths and I dived out of the boat. When I saw the ship standing there and the plane going overhead and a couple of guys peering over the top of the upturned hull, it was heaven, absolute heaven."



Tony Bullimore surfaces from his upturned yacht and is hauled on to a rubber dinghy and wrapped in foil (below) by rescuers from the Adelaide



"Exactly how much market research did you do?"

Mr Bullimore's ordeal had begun at 6 pm on Sunday when he and fellow yachtsman Thierry Dubois — both taking part in the Vendée Globe round-the-world race — sent out four distress signals. Their boats had been overturned by a fierce wind and mountainous seas 1,500 miles south west of Australia. Mr Dubois took to his liferaft and was eventually winched to safety by a helicopter from the Adelaide. Mr Bullimore sought refuge in a tiny watertight compartment in his yacht's upturned hull. Outside there were 60 knot winds, 50 foot swells and a temperature hovering just

above freezing. Inside, it was wet and pitch black. The 5ft 3in sailor activated his distress beacons and prepared himself for a long wait. He knew that he was at least three days' sailing from land and that there was no possibility of a helicopter rescue at that distance. Also, with his radio lost, it was impossible to contact the race organisers in Paris. But he still had a few tricks up his sleeve. Back at rescue headquarters in Canberra, the signal from the beacons was being monitored closely. Some 24 hours after the first signals were picked up, the team noticed a change in the beacon's mode, which could only have been done manually, and realised that the skipper must be alive.

Come day two in the black air bubble, Mr Bullimore's spirits lifted when he heard the drone of an aircraft. An RAAF Orion came low over the capsized craft, but could see no sign of its skipper or its liferaft and flew on. Mr Bullimore had guessed that the plane came from the Royal Australian Air Force and was confident that help was on its way. But by now he was hungry and thirsty. He had no water, he was developing frostbite and he had amputated part of his finger while shutting a hatch. By day three, he knew help was getting closer when he heard the noise from a sonar beacon which had been dropped alongside. These devices have acutely sensitive

microphones and Mr Bullimore knew that his rescuers hoped for a response, so he tapped on the wall of his hull. When an Air Force Orion turned into the knocking, rescuers feared at first that it might be coming from debris in the hull, but when they analysed the recording there was a definite sequence. On day four, the severely dehydrated Mr Bullimore decided to encourage his rescuers by activating the last beacon he had kept tucked in his red immersion suit. The noise was picked up by a nearby Orion. Suddenly the Adelaide's horn blasted across the ocean. As Colonel Andrew Reynolds of the Australian Defence Force said afterwards: "Tony's

head just popped up out of the water and we pulled him on to an inflatable. He obviously heard the horn and decided now's the time to leave." Mr Bullimore smiled as he was transferred to the Adelaide. "Thank you," he said. "Could I have a cup of tea?" The Adelaide is now expected to return to Fremantle, by Monday, when Mr Bullimore and M Dubois will be reunited with their families. The rescue operation is believed to have cost the Australian Government about £3 million and while there was elation at the success of the venture, the sports minister, Warwick Smith, called for race organisers to change the rules so that competitors do not sail so far south.

Bullimore's story, pages 2, 3
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Oxford yields, page 5
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Sinatra suffers heart attack

Frank Sinatra, 81, was taken to hospital in Beverly Hills after suffering an "uncomplicated" heart attack. The entertainer's prognosis was said to be good and he was undergoing tests and treatment.

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Franc put in shade by soaring pound

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

THE pound marched to its highest level for four years yesterday as the French franc moved further down. The pound now stands at Fr9 for the first time since it left the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1992 — two years ago it bought only Fr7.60. The moves came as investors responded to the dramatic gap opening up between the healthy performance of the British economy and deepening economic problems on the continent. The mark slumped after figures showing that German unemployment has reached 4.16 million, its best level for four years, speaking in Tokyo, Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor,

said that the economy had never been better. In comparison, continental economies are facing worsening problems because of the race to meet the Maastricht treaty criteria for joining a single currency. They are having to squeeze their budget deficits and this, in turn, is leading to weak growth and rising unemployment. One of the major reasons why investors are such enthusiastic buyers of the pound is that British interest rates are expected to rise this year to prevent a runaway consumer boom while European governments may have to cut their interest rates to bolster their sagging economies.

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Pennington, page 27
Anatole Kaletsky, page 29

Boy truant dies in frozen pond

A TRUANT schoolboy collecting golf balls from a frozen pond yesterday became the seventh person this winter to die after falling through ice (Gillian Bowditch and Michael Hornsby write). Peter John Sinclair, 15, ignored warnings from pensioners at Auchmarvie golf course at Stevenston, near Ardrossan, Ayrshire. After getting into trouble he tried to swim to an island but could not stay afloat. A firefighter waded into the pond with a rope around his chest but was brought out suffering from hypothermia. The Meteorological Office said the cold will continue today with more snow possible, but forecast a thaw in northern and western Britain from Saturday.

Forecast, page 24

Major gambles on Wirral by-election

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

JOHN MAJOR has opted for the high-risk strategy of holding a by-election in Wirral South which could put the Tories into a minority administration weeks before a general election. Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, made the surprise announcement that the Government would move a parliamentary writ for the by-election by February 3. A poll would be then held late next month or in early March. Tory strategists said the by-election would make it less likely that the Prime Minister would call a general election on March 20. They said May 1 was still his favoured option. Tony Blair immediately urged the people of Wirral South to give a lead to the rest of the country: Labour would need a swing of 8.2 per cent

to take the seat. He said Labour had bounced the Government into holding the by-election. The decision ends weeks of speculation that the Government would delay the poll so that it was superseded by the general election. The Tories are not tipped to hold the seat and such a move would have avoided the risk of a demoralising defeat in the run-up to a general election. But Dr Mawhinney said the Government would abide by parliamentary convention and move the writ by February 3, three months after the death last November of Barry Porter, who held the seat with a majority of 8,183. The contest would then take place by March 6 at the latest.

Asian voters wooed, page 12

He'll take you to the killing ground, but then you're on your own.

GERALD SEYMOUR

Killing Ground

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هكذا من الأصل

Tony Bullimore's own account of his ordeal - and the moment he realised he was safe

'I heard a diver banging, it was Heaven'

Tony Bullimore told the story of his incredible five-day fight for survival, holed up in a tiny air pocket in his upturned yacht, to Jerry Pratley, a reporter for the West Australian newspaper in Perth, who is on board HMAS Adelaide

I WAS starting to doubt whether I would be saved when I heard a diver banging on the side of the hull. I had to think about it for a few seconds because there was continuous banging all the time from the rigging. The banging was a big, heavy banging, and it was like Heaven. It was like Heaven.

Then I heard a voice outside and I started shouting. "I'm coming, I'm coming." It took me a few seconds to get from one end of the boat to the other. Then I took a few deep breaths and I dived out of the boat.

When I saw the ship standing there and the plane going overhead, and a couple of guys peering over the top of the upturned hull, it was Heaven, absolute Heaven. I really, really never thought I would

reach that far. I was starting to look back over my life and was starting to think, "Well, I've had a good life. I've done most of the things I had wanted to do."

I think if I was picking words to describe it, it would be a miracle, an absolute miracle. You've got about two thirds of the hull filled with water. There was a hole in the bottom of the hull, in fact really at the top, where one of the windows had come out, and it caused a type of vacuum. The hole caused water to be sucked in and out at a colossal rate that caused a kind of Niagara Falls, but upside-down.

I had to find myself a spot as high up as possible and put nets around it, so that I could

crawl in there and lash myself in to get out of the water and to get away from everything. God, I never thought I would be here. I've been in some situations in my life before, but this was the hardest. It was pitch dark down there and I had no torches, and the vacuum from the hole where the window had broken was terrible. It sucked everything out of the boat, actually ripping the chart table out. All sorts of fittings-out like the radios, a chair and everything, went out - it was quite amazing. I had to spend a lot of time up in my little den, my little hide-hole.

I stayed curled up to keep myself warm and had to come down, get into the water, which was up to my neck, to get to the entranceway to see what was going on. I wanted to get to the liferaft because I was frightened that anybody who would come might just look and say, "Ah, it's all finished."

I had to dive out of the entranceway and swim up through the cockpit, until I got to the liferaft and start lashing it. I couldn't get the rope off because I only had under a minute to dive up there. My breath was not too good because I smoke.

I went up there about a dozen times and each time I went up there I had to immediately go back to my little hole so that I could warm up. I would have to stay there for about two hours to warm up, then go back down to have another go.

When I started this race, and I got myself together and got the boat together, I never dreamt of something like this. I've had a lot of experience, I've done over 200,000 miles of ocean racing. I'm a bit of a loner. I'm not a rich man, I come from a pretty ordinary family and I've struggled all the way.

I had different problems with the boat on the way. One of my fuel tanks broke down and I lost half my fuel. Then my Satcom C [communications link] went down and my heater went, then the bilge

pump was giving trouble and there were a lot of other minor problems. Then I started getting creaking noises from the keel.

But the funny thing was that the first bad weather I got in the Southern Ocean wasn't too bad, 50-55 knots. I couldn't go downwind with it because the boat wanted to keep luffing up the bow kept turning into the direction from which the wind was blowing: the effect is to stop the boat. But I was doing a steady 10-15 knots and as soon as I put the automatic pilot on, the boat wanted to luff up. It was doing 25 knots and luffing up.

I had to change course and run under bare poles [without any sails]. I thought I had it conquered. I thought I had found a way. Then I went down to Heard Island and was actually within five miles of Heard Island. It was absolutely fabulous. I took some pictures and it was really lovely.

I felt really happy with all this. I made myself a nice cup



Tony Bullimore moments after his rescue yesterday, comforted by Chief Petty Officer Bosun Peter Wicker and Leading Seaman Clearance Diver Alan Rub.

of tea, opened a pack of biscuits and thought, "This is great."

I got over that, then got into this high [pressure system]. I had four days of high, with blue skies, flat seas, doing about 8-10 knots, not very fast but it's the time to dry out the boat.

I dried out the boat. I dried some clothes and cooked a nice curry, a nice stinking-hot curry. I had some cheese and biscuits and everything was nice.

Then the wind started to come, and come, and come. I didn't have a weather fax, Satcom C or nothing like that. I had to smell the weather, smell it because I didn't have any other way of knowing what was happening.

Then the winds hit 25-30 knots, 35-40 knots, 45-50, 55-60 and then it was rolling around. I got the boat going beautifully, bare poles, lashed everything down, got everything tucked away down below and put everything in a position so that you could be

chucked from one side to the other with no damage.

I was sitting there with my old cup of tea and then bang, the keel popped off. The moment it banged off, the boat went over so quick. It rolled and rolled and rolled. Then I was standing on the bottom [roof] of the boat and for most of the night it was OK.

Then the window went in and water started coming in like Niagara Falls.

Let's put it this way, with the experiences that I've experienced with this, there is no room to try to be too radical and have too much high technology. You have to have everything completely tested, tested again and triple-tested, if you want to go long distances.

If you want to play games, you do it in Sydney Harbour, or Plymouth Harbour in England, or Newport Rhode Island. You don't go down past Heard Island, then hope your keel will hang on with a new, radical system, or with new masts or something like that.

You have to be very careful to undertake such a long voyage.

I was amazed. I was amazed with myself.

I've been there before. I have to tell you, I've been in the middle of the Atlantic, in a liferaft, nearly 20 years ago. It was a different kind of calamity, but there you are.

I was in the Bay of Biscay in another situation in a very fast boat in 1986 that did a flip, so I'm a bit of a glutton for punishment.

But now that I'm getting a bit old, there is one thing - and I don't mind telling the world - I've become more human in these last six days. I'm a different person. I won't be so rude to people, not that I was, but I'll be much more of a gentleman and, equally, I'll listen to people a lot more.

And as a dear old friend of mine, David Mathieson, said, when he had a heart attack - and I've never had a heart attack, I've got a strong heart. I hope I still have - he said that when he got over it and opened his window in his

bedroom, and he peered out and smelt the fresh air and all the rest of it, he said, "God, it was like being born all over again. Life was great."

Well, that's how I feel now, like being born all over again. I wasn't sure if I heard planes flying overhead or whether I was imagining it. I was in my little hole and I heard this "vroom" noise two or three times, and I got up like lightning and went to the entranceway to make sure. I had been tricked by that before, with the noises of the rig.

I thought that if I dived out, I might not get back in. I had lost my toolbag. I was going to make a hole in the hull so I could fire rockets through and put my emergency beacon out there. I thought that as soon as I had a spare beacon, that I could play with [the frequency] that could be recognised.

Like when the diver banged on the hull, in a funny old way I knew it was a bloody human being. Before that I would hear bangs and sit there for

half an hour, but it would be the same rhythm bangs and I thought it was part of the boat. Then I thought I heard helicopters just after the planes, but whether that was possible or not I just didn't know. When I heard that I nearly cried, because I thought, "Christ, I've missed my opportunity," and the helicopters had gone off, thinking this was a waterlogged boat that was finished. I thought to myself, "I should have dived out, come out and swam around, rain, hail or shine, and take the chance."

When I heard the helicopter again, it was like Heaven. When I heard the banging on the side, I picked up anything I could, used my fist, anything to bang the side.

I went through three cabins to get to the other end, screaming: "I'm coming out, I'm coming out." I took a few deep breaths, and came out, straight through the hole, and the ship was standing there and I thought, "I'm saved. I'm all right."

Proud Australia shrugs off the £3m cost of a job well done

THE price of one life in the waters of the Southern Ocean can be staggeringly expensive: insurance experts yesterday put the cost of saving Tony Bullimore and Thierry Dubois at more than £3 million.

Yet the bill to cover four airforce planes, which flew around the clock for nearly four days, plus a week-long voyage by a navy frigate and a support vessel, has not so far seemed to bother most Australians.

The cheers that greeted his rescue could be heard right across the nation and there was an immediate outpouring of relief and the celebration of a job well done. Someone, somewhere, however has to pick up the tab.

Nearly 300 naval and airforce personnel were active-

ly engaged in the rescue with many more providing logistical back-up. The frigate Adelaide cost £50,000 a day. The aircraft which spent four days searching the seas cost tens of thousands of pounds an hour to keep in the air.

Then there are the smaller items such as the sonar bouys which were placed alongside Mr Bullimore's yacht and the liferafts which were dropped to him and Dubois. Under international shipping law, the cost of diverting the oil tanker Sanko Phoenix will be met by the vessel's company.

Yet The Australian Defence Minister, Ian McLachlan, was keen to play down the cost of the rescue last night and to emphasise the positive. "This has not been a loss to us but a great morale boost," he said.

"It will also produce a great store of knowledge, which you can't buy. So it won't be a case of the extra cost to the military of this rescue, because the extra flying and sailing hours involved will simply be taken off future exercises."

Mr McLachlan said the Government was not counting the cost of the rescue mission and was bound by moral and legal obligations to go to the aid of sailors.

The country is obliged by international treaty to rescue people up to 1500 nautical miles off its coastline whatever the cost. "We have done what is required and we would do it again."

Privately, Australian maritime safety chiefs are annoyed with the Vendée Globe race organisers for allowing com-

petitors to sail so far south. Warwick Smith, the Sports Minister, called on the organisers to change the rules. He wants them to adopt safer sailing routes, where the seas are calmer and more easily accessible to rescue craft.

Mr Smith also wrote to his French counterpart, Guy Druet, seeking a joint approach to international yacht race organisers. This week's operation was the furthest ever undertaken by Australia's air-sea rescue authorities and stretched them to the limit.

Even so the ultimate success of the mission has clearly bathed Australia in glory. Prime Minister John Howard praised the professional efforts of the rescue team. Opposition leader Kim Beazley said: "The rescue mis-

sions are a tribute to the skills, determination and bravery of the members of the Australian defence forces and the service people who took part in the rescue operation."

Unlike the BT Global Challenge round-the-world race, the Vendée Globe has no high-profile insurance sponsor. Mr Bullimore's £500,000 yacht,



Price of life: The rescue of Thierry Dubois, left, and Tony Bullimore may cost more than £3 million

Exide Challenger, was not insured because the race is regarded as one of the most dangerous sporting events in the world and insurers are reluctant to provide cover.

But if lives are in danger in the Southern Ocean again, Australia is certain to go to the rescue again without counting the cost.

TESTED TO THE LIMIT

Tony Bullimore's survival is a distinguished addition to the annals of human endurance. In the pursuit of adventure, or by sheer bad luck, many have found their ability to survive tested to the limits.

■ 1914: the explorer Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton and his fellow Antarctic expedition members survived 15 months on the ship *Endurance* when it was cast adrift, crushed by packed ice and buffeted by ice floes.

■ 1942: Poon Lim, a 2nd steward in the Merchant Navy, was cast adrift on a raft in the Atlantic for 133 days when his ship was blown up under enemy fire. He was spotted by aircraft and picked up in April 1943.

■ 1972: 14 Uruguayans survived 80 days in the freezing conditions of the Andes after their light aircraft crashed near the Chilean/Uruguayan border. They resorted to cannibalism to stay alive.

■ 1982: Anna Conrad was buried by an avalanche at a ski resort in northern California but survived for five days by eating snow.

■ 1989: four shipwrecked yachtsmen from New Zealand spent 120 days in the upturned hull of their trimaran in the Pacific. They ate seagulls and raw fish and were eventually washed up on Great Barrier Island, near Auckland.

■ 1992: James Stott survived for 43 days 2,000 feet up a Himalayan rockface. He had only two bars of chocolate.

■ 1994: five soldiers survived for three weeks in the Borneo jungle after going missing on a training exercise. They had two polo mints and a drop of water a day.

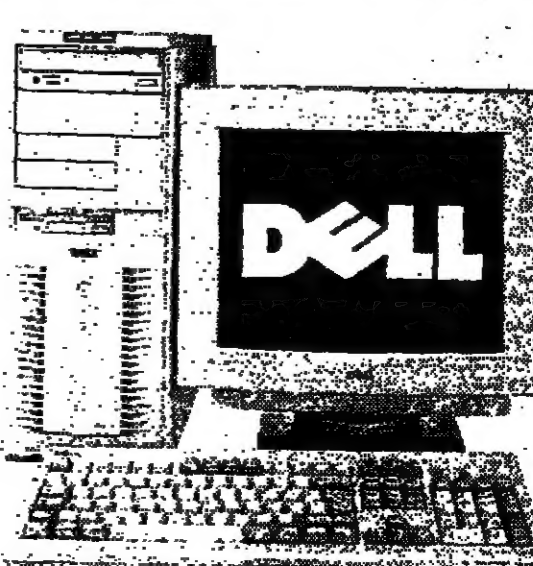
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Briton could be transported from big seas to big screen after agent's mid-ocean call to fame

Hollywood beckons for real-life Del Boy

By ADRIAN LEE, DANIEL McGRORY AND TIM JONES

AMONG the telephone calls Tony Bullimore received on HMAS Adelaide yesterday was one from an agent of the Hollywood actor and producer Kevin Costner, interested in making a film about his survival story.

What the agent may not have known is that the entire career of the former Essex barrow boy is the stuff of film legend, though perhaps more suited to Del Boy Trotter than Kevin Costner.

The teenage Bullimore had a yearning for adventure and would constantly play truant from school in Southend-on-Sea with his closest friend, Dave Mathieson. They helped Mr Bullimore's father, Bill, to run market stalls in Romford and Southend. "At 15 they launched a wedding photography business on Southend pier, Tony Bullimore says, said Mr Mathieson, "the luckiest, gutsiest man you could meet. He has always survived by his wits, and is a real rough diamond."

He gave up wedding photography after being chased down the road by the angry father of a bride whose pictures had not come out, and spotted an advertisement looking for an experienced sailor to crew a yacht to South Africa. He lied about his experience and set sail, picking up odd jobs as a carpet layer and becoming a black belt at judo. He was asked to try out for the Springboks judo team.

After four years, he was persuaded by his family to return to Britain. He could not resist an invitation to take to sea and it was during one voyage to the Caribbean that he met his wife, Lalel, in Kingston, Jamaica.

In 1963 he recognised that the influx of West Indian immigrants offered a business opportunity. He opened the Bamboo Club in the St-Paul's area of Bristol and it quickly became a focus for reggae music. Bob Marley was one of the stars who performed there before the club mysteriously burnt down in the mid-1970s.

Mr Bullimore's passion for



Stephen Mulvany is Tony Bullimore's nephew, business partner and "Rodney" to his uncle's "Del"

music persuaded him to open the Granary Club in Bristol, a late-night venue known for its eclectic tastes, which closed ten years ago. "Like most things he just got bored and wanted to move on," Mr Mathieson said.

He founded his own company, Bradkney International, run from a cramped office in Digbeth, Birmingham, buying up bankrupt stock for resale. Adie McLean, the company's office manager, said yesterday: "We shifted everything from toys to shoe polish to cosmetics."

Barry Pickthall, the former Times yachting correspondent who sailed with Mr Bullimore in the Round Britain race, said: "He is an absolute Del Boy, except that he comes from Southend, not Peckham. He was always wheeler-dealing." Like Del Boy, he has his

tomb. "He had a sweet tooth, so it could have been anything he could get his hands on," Mr Mulvany said. He added: "We haven't had chance to talk about offers with Tony. We are just thrilled he is alive."

In another Del Boy touch, Mr Bullimore has a fondness for using French words. Mr Pickthall said: "I remember once he walked into a lavish club owned by the Aga Khan in Sarina. Tony took one look around and said, 'This is very sozante-neuf, isn't it?'"

"He is not the most skilled

sailor, but he has a tremendous capacity to succeed and he always gave us a laugh."

On another occasion, while struggling to raise the money to sponsor his round-the-world challenge, he was left with boxes of a million and a half toy characters from the television cartoon series The Simpsons. "We thought we would be stuck with them forever, but Tony somehow shifted them," Mrs McLean said.

Mr Mathieson insisted that

Mr Bullimore "could sell ice cubes to Eskimos" and recounted how, to rescue a deal to sell baby food to Zaire, Mr Bullimore was summoned for an acrimonious meeting with the Zairean dictator, President Mobutu.

"Mobutu was shouting and Tony, who is only 5ft 3in but can handle himself and fears no-one, said, 'You won't do any business with me until you get some manners.' Mobutu pointed back and said, 'For a white man you have got a big mouth,' but there was mutual respect and the deal was done."

John Lewis, who is secretary of the Royal Western Yacht Club, where Mr Bullimore has been a member for 20 years, said: "He is living proof that this is not a sport just for the privileged. You won't find many braver."

Bob Beggs, a fellow club

member and transatlantic yachtsman, said last night: "Tony is always the first to put his hand in his pocket and to congratulate you. Those who



Lalel Bullimore at home yesterday. She met her husband in Kingston, Jamaica

perhaps come into this sport through their college or their families would never attempt such a voyage. You have to be a little bit mad like Tony, and a true hero."

He said that Mr Bullimore was famed for his love of tea and curries which were too hot for anyone else on board to eat. After yesterday's rescue, his first words were "Thank God - it's a miracle," followed by a request for a cup of tea.

Another crewmate, Nigel Irens, with whom Mr Bullimore won the Yachtsman of the Year award in 1985,

said: "He is a compulsive risk-taker, both in sailing and in business. There are two schools of sailor: the regatta type and the adventurer. Tony is definitely one of the latter."

"He is at his best when the rulebook goes out of the window. For the sort of thing he goes in for, it is a question of whether you have got the balls for it or not."

To win the 1985 accolade, Mr Bullimore climbed the mast of his yacht to make temporary repairs to a broken halyard when his crew member was on the verge of

retiring. They went on to win the race. "I was amazed," said Mr Irens, who sailed with Mr Bullimore for four years and is now a boat designer.

Bids by newspapers alone for his story had reached more than £160,000 last night. As the offers poured in, Mr Mulvany said: "We don't know if Tony will say yes to anything. He is his own man. But I suspect he might fancy having Kevin Costner play him in the film. Not bad for a Southend boy."

Leading article, page 21

High seas present ultimate challenge

By EDWARD GORMAN SAILING CORRESPONDENT

WHY do they do it? It is a question hard not to ask after the dramas of recent days in the Southern Ocean.

The urge to take on solo those untamed forces comes from the same inner source that drives others not just to climb the world's highest peaks, but to do so alone and without oxygen. In sailing, the challenge of the sea is there for anyone to face, but for some, the desire to confront the ultimate goal is overwhelming.

It was the British who started single-handed round-the-world sailing with Sir Francis Chichester. Sir Robin Knox-Johnston and Chay Blyth but the French now dominate with a series of races. The Vendée Globe offers the chance of winning the ultimate contest on the world's most dangerous and unpredictable course. The boat must be kept sailing month after month while it is battered by the elements.

There is also a chance to experience one of the last great freedoms, voyaging through some of the wildest places on earth.

So far the Vendée Globe has remained gloriously free of regulation. The boats have to be monohulls, 50 to 60ft long. Beyond that it is largely up to the designers. The course is almost unrestricted as well, though there are three waypoints which the skippers have to leave to starboard to prevent slipping into the icebergs deep down in the Southern Ocean. In the first race in 1989 only seven of the 13 starters finished, while in the second, in 1992, 14 started, seven finished and one skipper, the Englishman Nigel Burgess, drowned. This time, halfway through, eight of the 16 who started are out and there have been three rescues.

The huge costs of these operations are placing the race organisers under increasing pressure to further limit the course and the type of boats that can sail it.

Experience told sailor that his best bet was to stay with his boat

By EDWARD GORMAN

THE secret of Tony Bullimore's survival for five days in the Southern Ocean was his decision not to try to leave his crippled boat.

His 30-odd years of experience of sailing, which has included several perilous capsize, told him that attempting to leave the hull and get into his liferaft could prove fatal. He put his faith in the realisation that, eventually, someone would come to check the boat to see if he was still in it.

Immediately before the capsize, Mr Bullimore had weathered a storm, which was followed by four days of relative calm when he was able to dry out his boat. It was when the storms returned that the keel of *Edie Challenger* was ripped off, causing the yacht to capsize in seconds.

Because of the high sea, Mr Bullimore is thought to have been strapped into his navigation station when the boat rolled 180 degrees. He may not have had the main hatch shut at that moment and lost the tip of his "little finger" as he attempted to shut it with water pouring in. He found himself in a dark, noisy, wet and cold upside-down world. The cabin roof windows were now the floor and at least one of them burst open with the pressure of the water, producing a fountain of icy water.

Mr Bullimore abandoned his pilot house at the top of the cabin, where the water level



was rising, for the main hull lower down, where he seems to have lashed himself into a bunk to try to keep dry. He had no torch to see what he was doing and kept himself alive with nibbles of chocolate and sips of fresh water. Every now and again he dived through the freezing water under the deck to check the lashing on his liferaft, to make sure it had not freed itself, which might convince rescu-

ers he had been swept away. Mr Bullimore was wearing a British dry suit supplied by Musto, an Essex-based company. That suit and the company's thermal "breathable" underwear and middle-layer clothing are likely to have made a big contribution to his survival, helping to fight hypothermia and frostbite.

The dry suit is designed to provide two to three hours' survival time in water at 5C

and includes latex seals around the wrists and neck, a waterproof zip and integral waterproof feet. The "breathable" middle layers are designed to allow perspiration to diffuse rather than form an icy cold film next to the skin.

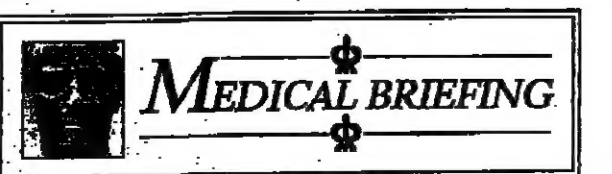
The third part of the equation was the emergency positioning indicating radio beacons (EPIRB) which all the competitors in the Vendée Globe were required to carry and which have become indispensable in mid-ocean rescues. There is a range of beacons made by companies around the world but they all work on the same principle. The beacons can be switched off or set to transmit either an alert signal or a distress signal via satellite to race headquarters. Some can be set to go off automatically when they are immersed in water and many are designed to transmit for weeks.

Mr Bullimore had one beacon on the stern of his boat - swept away in the capsize - and another in his liferaft, which was not activated. The third was with him in his upside-down cabin. That initially transmitted an alarm signal before he switched it to distress mode, something which helped to convince the Australian authorities he was alive and in his boat. Knowing that his EPIRB was working, with its light flashing continuously at him, will have gone a long way to convincing Mr Bullimore that eventually he would be found.

Will to live that marks a survivor

THE will to survive is an amazingly powerful force. Afflictions that kill some people leave others living a full life. Equally some patients turn their face to the wall when confronted by disaster, and die quickly from causes that can never be demonstrated at post-mortem examination.

However, a love of excitement and drama should not be equated with an ability to survive. Hazardous adventures. When people apply for apparently dangerous tasks it may be no more than a desire to be at the centre of atten-



Dr Thomas Stuttford

tion. People such as Tony Bullimore - self-reliant, answerable to nobody else, able to detach themselves from their domestic background and indifferent to what others think about this - are as hard mentally as they are physically. A successful adventurer must be decisive, calm, and still able to think logically when tired, wet and depressed. The unfathomable will to keep going makes it impossible to predict how long

somebody with a terminal illness will live.

Research shows that the determination to stay alive for the festival of the Passover results in fewer deaths among male Jews before the event, and an increase immediately afterwards. This Christmas one woman of my acquaintance was insistent that she would not die until after she had had a final Christmas with her family. She died on December 27.

Conversely, other patients, once told that they have an incurable complaint, will die within days.

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Ingenious keepers battle cold and beastly boredom as all but the hardiest animals are stuck indoors

It's too cool for cats as big chill grips the zoo

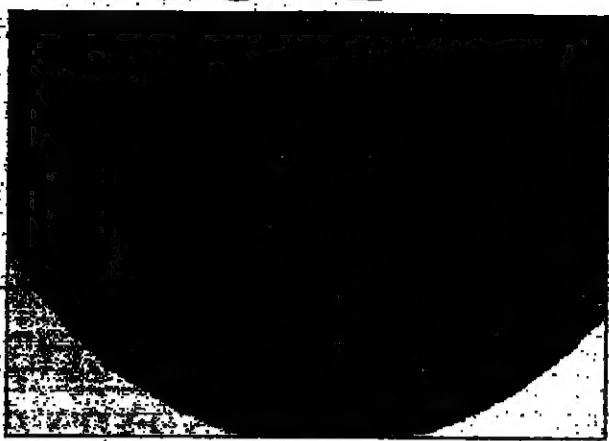
By MICHAEL HORNSBY

FOR the penguins and the timber wolves, it's a bit like a home from home. But the snowy wastes of London Zoo are proving less than hospitable for species from warmer climes. As temperatures remained at freezing point yesterday, keepers were at full stretch to keep spirits up and bodies warm.

The Asian lions Kamal, 3, and Ruchi, 9, have been forced to remain indoors for nine days because the 20ft mist that separates them from the few hardy visitors to their enclosure is frozen.

Man Hennessy, 51, a senior keeper in the big cats section, said: "We have to keep them in because they could try to walk over the water, which would not be wise for public safety or their own. They could easily fall through the ice and drown. There's no point in breaking the ice, because it only freezes over again."

Kamal and Ruchi stayed close to the electrically heated panels in their indoor den, rising only occasionally to peer out of the window. Like cricketers from the pavilion on a wet day waiting for a break in the weather. Around the corner, a forlorn flock of Chilean pink flamingoes remained on single legs to conserve heat and energy. The water level in their pool, having been lowered as a safety precaution. They are being fed



Ruchi the lioness peers out of the enclosure where it has been forced to stay in the warm for nine days

in their sheds because the pellets which they eat freeze in the water.

But, as the zoo counts the cost of extra straw and increased heating bills, some animals are thriving on the novelty of the coldest winter there since 1962-63.

Cong, the six-year-old rare Vietnamese gibbon, which spent its early years as a pet in Jordan, has never seen snow before and thinks it's wonderful. It is the only primate at the zoo to have forsaken the 70F comfort of life indoors to swing among the snow flakes in its suspended plastic tub — happy to chatter to anyone passing by.

Keith Lloyd, its keeper, said: "She loves it. She's like a child seeing snow for the first time."

It's difficult to persuade her back into the warm.

The chimps and gorillas have commandeered a large proportion of the extra supplies of straw with which to amuse themselves and keep warm. Cardboard boxes, paper bags and plastic bottles of diluted, vitamin-rich blackcurrant juice have also been supplied as playthings to stave off the boredom.

Little needs to be done, however, to keep up the spirits of the Asian elephants, even though their regular walks through the "Arc in the Park" have been suspended in case they slip on the icy walkways and injure themselves.

Dilberta, 17, Layang-Layang, 14, and Mya, 15, scoop up the snow with their

trunks and frisk with their keepers like children enjoying giant ice lollies. "It's a wonderful novelty for them," Brian Harman, the head keeper, said. "They like snowballs being thrown at them, and if we build a snowman, they take great delight in knocking it over."

Josephine, the hornbill, who at 50 is the oldest creature in the zoo, was said to be coping well with the weather. "She is keeping dry and warm in the parrot house and anyone expecting her obituary will hopefully have a long while to wait," a spokeswoman said.

Jo Gibbs, the director of London Zoo, said: "The cold weather doesn't really affect the animals at the zoo. Those that like the cold can go out while those that are sensitive are kept nice and warm."

More than 10,000 reindeer have starved to death in Russia's remote Chukotsky Peninsula since freak weather conditions cut off the herds from their traditional winter pastures. A long rainfall followed by freezing temperatures covered traditional winter grazing areas of the tundra beneath a thick sheet of ice.

Local herders have attempted to drive the remainder of the reindeer to less affected areas, but much of their livelihood and their food source has been wiped out. The herds have also been attacked by wolves.



The Asian elephants have had great fun scooping up the snow in their trunks

Man killed as snow hits travel in South

By MICHAEL HORNSBY

SNOW, ice and freezing temperatures caused traffic chaos, disrupted airports, and inflicted further hardships on wildlife yesterday.

The worst conditions were in south and southeast England, where up to four inches of snow fell in Kent and Sussex. Western Scotland was the warmest region, with temperatures of 4C. The coldest spot was Luton, at -10C.

Snow on the runway closed Luton airport for more than two hours. Seven aircraft were diverted to other airports. Stansted airport in Essex was closed for 45 minutes while the runway was cleared.

In Surrey, a man was killed and ten people injured in early-morning accidents involving more than 30 vehicles on the Hog's Back stretch of the A31 between Farnham and Guildford and on the A3 between Hindhead and Ripley. In Somerset, accidents blocked the A39 between Williton and Washford and the M5 near Highbridge.

In Kent, the AA took up to 2,000 calls an hour. The county's ambulance service dealt with around 500 calls an hour, mainly from people who had slipped on ice or been in road accidents.

Weekend shopping, page 10
Forecast, page 24

Oxford yields to campaign against Said school site

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

OXFORD UNIVERSITY has abandoned its controversial plan to site a £40 million business school on a sports ground in the city centre.

The decision, taken yesterday, followed widespread opposition among dons and city councillors to the use of the university sports field for the Wafic Rida. Said business school. The Mansfield Road site was the university's preferred option. Mr Said, who has pledged £20 million towards the project, has given the university until June 21 to find a new site.

The Syrian-born businessman said in November that he was reconsidering his donation after Congregation, the dons' parliament, voted 299 to 214 against the proposal. A survey funded by Mr Said for the dons debate concluded that the sports ground was the only feasible location.

Yesterday, university sources said that four sites were being considered but none was owned by the university. Buying land could add considerably to the cost of the scheme. Sites now under consideration are thought to include the Radcliffe Infirmary, which is due to move to the main John Radcliffe Hospital site, and car parks at Oxford's railway station and in Worcester Road. However, the hospital is unlikely to move before the planned opening of the business school next year.

Yesterday's decision avoided the need for a postal vote of all 3,200 university members on the use of the former Merion College field, which was given to the university in 1964 provided it remain a sports ground "in perpetuity". Mike Woodin, a lecturer in

psychology and a Green Party city councillor who led opposition to the plans, said: "I am delighted that we have forced the university to 'keep its promise' not to develop the Mansfield Road site. This saves an important open space and the staff sports club."

He said dons remained wary of the scheme because a majority of business school trustees were appointed by Mr Said, not the university.

A university spokesman said: "The University of Oxford and Mr Wafic Said and his fellow trustees of the Said Business School Foundation have jointly agreed that it is not practicable to proceed with the proposal to build new premises on the Mansfield Road site for the university's business school. They have not yet identified an alternative site which would be suitable and feasible but have agreed that the search should continue until the end of the Trinity term. A final decision will then be taken on whether it is possible to proceed."

The university and the benefactor remain firmly committed to the goal of developing a world class business school on a central site in Oxford.

Edward Bickham, a spokesman for Mr Said, said it was a joint decision to pull out of Mansfield Road to avoid the rancour of a postal vote and further divisive debate. "We had already received hostile signals to the plan from the city council. We wanted to get back on to a reasonable timetable and this seemed the best way forward."

The university has raised £8 million towards its £20 million share of the project.

Struggling football club signs up a lord

By PAUL WILKINSON

NOT since the earliest days of football, when it was still a gentlemen's game played by gentlemen, has a team boasted a lord among its players.

Alnwick Town FC hopes that the arrival of Lord James Percy will lift them from their position of next to bottom of the Northern League. Lord James, whose older brother is the Duke of Northumberland, yesterday signed playing forms with the club in the family's home town.

Mac Belfie, his new manager, thinks the big striker could play an important part in dragging his side up the second division of the league.

Lord James, 31, a bachelor, was more modest: "I will have to work on my fitness. I used to play at university ten years ago and it would be great to be in a few goals for Town. I am just worried they might fear my contract up when they have seen me in action at training."

Alnwick's compact St James's Park ground was built in the 1870s on the Duke's land in the shadow of Alnwick Castle. The present Duke is the club president, but Lord James will be just another player when he pulls on the team's black and white striped shirt. He insists team mates use his nickname, Jimmy.

John Common, the Alnwick chairman, said: "Despite having a member of the aristocracy on the books we are still desperate for cash and Jimmy will have to understand he won't be getting a playing fee or win bonus. I dare say he will have to put up with a bit of ribbing from the lads, but knowing him he will give as good as he gets."

A levels wrongly upgraded

Continued from page 1
conclusions to halt rumours about the severity of marking in English and the impact of a new examining code.

The report, by five experienced scrutineers, found so many failings that "it was not possible to have confidence in the validity and reliability of the examinations". Although no grades will be altered, Dr Tate conceded that the inflated scores might have denied candidates who took other syllabuses their rightful university

places. Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, said the board's conduct had been "wholly unacceptable" and added weight to the case for reviewing the examining system.


The Oxford and Cambridge Examinations' and Assessment Council (OCEAC), which is now responsible for the syllabus, said it fully accepted the criticism. However, John Saunders, who chaired the examiners before resigning last July, denied any impropriety. He said it was a "total lie" that the team had been "unduly influenced by candidates coming from famous independent schools."

He admitted that some grades had been increased without reference to the papers. Time constraints were such that if particular examiners were found to be out of line with the norm, their marks would be increased by a set amount across the board.

At a press briefing yesterday, Dr Tate said: "The way the examination process was conducted was unworthy of an examination board." He had demanded and received assurances that there would be no repetition in any of the board's syllabuses, but no further action was possible.

A spokesman for the Independent Schools Information Service said: "This is a very disturbing report. But there is no evidence of partiality being shown to 'independent schools.' State school head teachers, however, were outraged. John Dumford, head of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School and former president of the Secondary Heads Association, said: "I am appalled that my students may have been put at a disadvantage. It is shocking if candidates from one sector have been given advantages in the competitive world of university admissions."

Education, page 39




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Cabinet told to ensure more jobs for the girls

CABINET ministers have been told to select women for one in three of all appointments to public bodies and ministerial committees, but some ministers are aiming higher.

The instructions have been issued by Roger Freeman, the Public Services Minister, but it is clear that some ministers are already helping to champion women. Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, and Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, are the men doing most to help women into public life, according to a Whitehall document. They are even beating their two female Cabinet colleagues,

Gillian Shephard, the Education Secretary, and Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary.

Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, and Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, have the lowest proportion of women on departmental committees: 4.7 per cent at the Ministry of Defence, and 9 per cent at the Ministry of Agriculture. But every department is being urged to do better.

Mr Freeman said yesterday: "We are not yet in a position where, statistically, one in every three public appointees is a woman. I want to reach that position quickly."

More women than ever are serving in positions of influence on public bodies and committees. The Government is determined to increase their number even further, Valerie Elliott writes

and to go beyond it. It's not positive discrimination, nor an official target, but I believe it's a convenient benchmark and as a minimum it's sensible and achievable."

The strategy was drawn up after monitoring the first five years of Whitehall achievements in relation to Opportunity 2000, the Business

in the Community scheme to help women in the workplace. Although women now fill 31 per cent of all public appointments, against 23 per cent five years ago, Mr Freeman has asked each department to increase its number of women and members of ethnic minorities. At the Scottish Office, Mr Forsyth

appoints the highest number of women — 43 per cent — and wants to increase the proportion to 46.

Mr Howard wants the Home Office to ensure that women make up 45 per cent of all members of public bodies by September 2000 — the figure is 40 per cent now — and to maintain the ethnic minority proportion at 16 per cent. He also wants to include at least one woman on every shortlist.

Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, wishes to boost the number of women on public bodies from the present 35 per cent to 40 per cent by 2000, and

to ensure that at least one woman sits on every body.

Mrs Shephard's Department for Education and Employment has 36 per cent female representation on bodies and committees, but would like to increase that to 45 per cent.

At the National Heritage Department, Mrs Bottomley has 36 per cent of women on public bodies, and is aiming for 35 per cent. Mr Portillo hopes to boost the figure showing at the MoD to 10 per cent or 15 per cent by 2000. But Mr Hogg does not publish a target figure.

The Whitehall rankings for ap-

pointing women to public bodies and committees, with 1991 figures in brackets: Scottish Office 43.2 per cent (35 per cent); Home Office 40.7 (38); Health 37.7 (26); Education and Employment 36.2 (previously separate departments: Employment 24; Education 20); Northern Ireland 35.5 (23); Social Security 35.3 (27); Treasury 28.3 (13); Heritage 26.1 (16); Trade and Industry 24.7 (14); Cabinet Office 22.9 (10); Environment 22.5 (19); Welsh Office 22.1 (8); Lord Chancellor's Department 21.9 (20.4); Foreign Office 21.6 (19); Transport 17.1 (12); Agriculture 9.5 (5); Defence 4.7 (5).

Mother blames lack of council help for Rikki Neave's death

By DOMINIC KENNEDY

THE mother of six-year-old Rikki Neave, who was found strangled near his home after she neglected him for years, yesterday blamed social workers for failing to answer her cries for help.

Ruth Neave, 28, issued a statement from prison where she is serving seven years for neglecting her children, as a report said Rikki had been failed by social workers and

management in Cambridgeshire County Council's social services department. The report by The Bridge childcare consultancy made 29 recommendations for new procedures, although the council said some were already in practice.

Neave, who was cleared of the boy's murder last year, called for a public inquiry and blamed social workers for

failing to take Rikki off her hands temporarily. He had been playing truant from school when he was killed and his naked body dumped on wasteland in Peterborough.

Her solicitor, Paul Bacon, said: "There seemed to have been a considerable breakdown in communication. She was asking for help and it never came. If she had been given respite care with Rikki, he would not have been wandering the streets that day."

Neave was "very enthusiastic" about one of the report's recommendations, that people who had been in care as children should be allocated a social worker if they became young parents. She was 17 and living in a home when she became a mother and had been in and out of foster homes since she was two.

At her trial, the court was told that Neave had been persistently cruel to Rikki and his three sisters. She had squirmed washing-up liquid into her son's mouth, written "idiot" on his forehead and once dangled him over a



Ruth Neave and her son, Rikki, who was killed while playing truant; the mother claimed Cambridgeshire social services had done little to help her look after him

NEW REPORT, SAME OLD FINDINGS

Children's charities said last night that little had been learnt from a series of inquiries into how officialdom had failed children who died while in the care of local authorities (Richard Ford writes).

John Rea Price, director of the National Children's Bureau, said: "More or less the same points come up in each inquiry. It's the same story. The folks on the ground don't talk to each other because of their preoccupation with their own immediate problems."

Many of the criticisms made 25 years ago during the inquiry into the death of seven-year-old Maria Colwell had continued to appear in later investigations. They highlight inexperienced officials, poor record-keeping, overworked social workers and, at times, too much adherence to ideology in place of common sense.

bridge. The Bridge Child Care Development Service said that in April 1994 Rikki's name was placed on the child protection register but, although he had been bruised, no medical examination was made, his child protection investigation was never completed, there was no comprehensive assessment of his needs and a child psychologist's opinion was ignored.

Rikki's files kept going missing and appeared to have been lost for up to two years before his death in November 1994. Cambridgeshire social

services was being reorganised in 1994 and there was an unusually high number of disputes among the Peterborough East team responsible for Rikki.

Gordon Lister, chief executive of Cambridgeshire County Council, was invited to a press conference yesterday to say sorry to Rikki's relatives. He responded: "We have great sympathy with the family."

The former director of social services, Tad Kubisa, has retired. Two social workers were suspended immediately after the trial and another on

the eve of this report's publication.

The family of Rikki's father, Trevor Harvey, are seeking a public inquiry to establish why the wider family was not considered in the handling of Rikki's case.

Sir Herbert Laming, Chief Inspector of Social Services for the Government, has given Cambridgeshire three months to implement the report's recommendations. These include seeking children's own opinions, improving file-keeping and following guidelines on risk assessment.

Brittan outlines risks of two-speed Europe

Sir Leon Brittan gave warning yesterday that John Major's call for a two-speed European Union could leave Britain trailing in the wake of France and Germany.

Addressing Conservatives in Bristol, Britain's senior European Commissioner said: "The risk is that a small group of countries forge ahead into new areas of activity, leaving the rest behind, and worst of all, the leading groups would have a disproportionate influence. That would amount to the division of the European Union into two, and an effective hegemony by a small group. Exactly the outcome that Britain has for so long sought to avoid."

Protest at Gallagher caution

An all-party group of MPs and peers yesterday protested to the Home Secretary over the Oasis singer Liam Gallagher receiving no more than a police caution for possessing cocaine. Tim Rathbone, Conservative chairman of the Parliamentary Drugs Mission Group, wrote to Michael Howard that Gallagher's "lenient" treatment would "bring the law into disrepute" and that the case was particularly serious because he was seen as an example by young people.

Gardiner's fresh challenge

Sir George Gardiner's hopes of remaining MP for Reigate suffered another blow yesterday after it emerged that more than 350 local Tories had signed a motion of no confidence in him. Many of them have rejoined the party so that they can vote against the veteran Euro-sceptic later this month: more than 180 left last June when Sir George defeated an attempt to deselect him. His opponents hope that if he loses he will feel morally obliged to stand aside.

£500 fine over Hawick ride

One of the leading opponents of women taking part in Hawick Common Riding was fined £500 after a sheriff found him guilty of spitting at a woman rider and swearing at other supporters. John McKinnon, 50, a local councillor, had denied breaching the peace on June 1 when four women joined the all-male ride through Hawick to Denholm. He was sentenced by Jedburgh Sheriff Court after a hearing last month.

MoD 'could save millions'

The Ministry of Defence could save £20 million a year with more efficient use of electricity, gas and water, according to Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor-General. It could save nearly £2 million by simply checking power and water bills. He praised the MoD for reducing its energy use by 20 per cent in five years but said there was still "significant scope" for further savings on the £180 million bill for power and water.

Don quits over fake degrees

The principal of a university college has resigned after colleagues unearthed discrepancies in his *Who's Who* listing of academic and other achievements. Duane Wade-Hampton Arnold, 43, Principal of St Chad's College at Durham University, had been on leave of absence since the autumn. However, his entry in the 1997 *Who's Who*, published yesterday, still includes one of the bogus degrees despite checks with the university.

Widow appeals over baby

Diane Blood, 31, the widow seeking to have her dead husband's baby, takes her case to the Court of Appeal on Monday. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority banned her from using his frozen sperm because she did not have his written permission. An unnamed widow with such consent is expecting twins. She is thought to be the first to become pregnant after sperm from her late husband was injected into her eggs.

Wakeham keeps press role

Lord Wakeham has agreed to stay on as chairman of the Press Complaints Commission until the end of 1999. The decision to extend his contract, which was to have expired at the end of 1997, had the full backing of President of the newspaper industry board which funds the PCC. Lord Wakeham is widely considered in the industry as well-suited to leading off statutory controls on the press.

Dog-lovers spurn Lassie

Gone are the days of Lassie, Rover, Ginger and Fido: six out of ten of dogs' names most often chosen by pet-owners and five out of ten of the favourite cats' names also appear among the 50 most popular names for babies. The only traditional pet's name among the top ten, compiled by the pet insurers PetPlan, was Tiger. The favourite dog's name was Max, and the favourite cat's name was Charlie.

The Tory club that's ready for turning

By LIN JENKINS

A CONSERVATIVE club is considering dropping its affiliation to the Tories in an attempt to improve its popularity. Members of the club in Ilfracombe, Devon, have been asked to vote on the issue after numbers fell from 700 to 400.

The plan to alter the name to the Ilfracombe Club has saddened the National Association of Conservative Clubs. Ken Hargreaves, secretary of the association, said changing would not necessarily improve matters since such clubs normally remained known by their long-established names.

Members did not have to be Conservatives. "But I would caution that while dropping the word might attract new people, it may work two ways and they lose the people who join only because it is the Conservative Club," Mr Hargreaves said.

Edward Turner, club secretary, said there were no political connotations in the change. "If it was called Uncle Henry's Club and we changed it to Uncle Thomas's, it would be the same."

He said most members joined to have somewhere to drink, play snooker or billiards or to use the skittle alley. "The simple fact is that we face a lot of competition in the town for the people who might join. We have to find out how we can improve our share of the business."

MPs back Ashdown on Labour alliance

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY

LIBERAL Democrat divisions widened yesterday over moves to develop closer ties with the Labour Party.

Opponents of cross-party discussions looked increasingly isolated as other MPs enthusiastically backed Paddy Ashdown's drive to influence Labour thinking. MPs led by Liz Lynne, the MP for Rochdale, have criticised the party leadership for becoming involved in extensive discussions with Labour over constitutional and electoral reform, saying that such an alliance would strip the party of its independence.

However, some colleagues say that an alliance offers the party its best opportunity to influence the pace and content of devolution and reforms to the House of Lords, as well as of bringing in a freedom of information Act.

Emma Nicholson, the former Tory MP, said that Ms Lynne was mistaken and was swayed by "doorstep problems" in Rochdale, where the two parties were locked in a bitter contest. "I feel in my bones that, without a Liberal Democrat partnership, a Labour government will not be strong enough in its political will to achieve these changes."

Talks between the parties are expected to be completed next month, but they face substantial problems over the Liberal Democrats' demand for Tony Blair to commit himself to electoral reform.

'Demon Eyes' posters win advertising award

By ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

THE Conservative Party's controversial "Demon Eyes" posters have won the 1996 Campaign of the Year award run by the advertising industry magazine *Campaign*.

The campaign, featuring a picture of the Labour leader Tony Blair with two sinister eyes superimposed on his face under the slogan "New Labour... New Danger", cost the Tory party £125,000 but generated an estimated £5 million of free publicity in terms of press and broadcast coverage, according to the magazine.

Stefano Hatfield, Editor of *Campaign*, said: "The ad set

out to capitalise on the undercurrent of doubt about Tony Blair's personality — does he smile too much and can you trust him? — and it succeeded."

Although the actor whose eyes were used in the campaign "subsequently complained of the use to which they were put, the controversy surrounding the advertisement was seen as a key to its success. The Advertising Standards Authority subsequently ruled that the poster was offensive to Mr Blair and asked the Conservative Party to withdraw it, generating yet more publicity for the party."

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'I am 99 per cent certain we are going back,' Virgin chief declares after winning family's support

Bullish Branson plans to reach for the skies again

By Andrew Pierce

RICHARD BRANSON flew home yesterday and revealed that he would return to Morocco for a third bid to circumnavigate the globe in a balloon.

The businessman, undaunted by the near-fatal collapse of Tuesday's voyage, secured warm support from his wife and children within hours of the emergency landing in the Algerian desert.

Mr Branson, speaking to The Times at the London control centre of the Virgin Challenger, said: "I enjoy life, but I want to try again. I want to do it. I am 99 per cent certain we are going back. But we have to ensure we have the resources to make it practically and technically possible."

Mr Branson disclosed that the crew lost control as the balloon lost height because the sealed helium bubble inside it, which was supposed to provide the buoyancy, cooled too quickly. The sun heated the helium during the day but the three small propane gas burners used at night were either turned on too late or were not powerful enough.

Mr Branson, who arrived on a private jet from Algeria, where he was a guest of the Government, said: "We discussed at length the technology of heating the helium on the flight home. I'm confident we can get round the problem. Once we have, I'm sure we will be going back."



Richard Branson in the Virgin Challenger capsule before the flight which nearly ended in disaster

Mr Branson was home last night for dinner with his wife Joan, 50, and their two children, Sam, 11, and Alex, 14. Mrs Branson, who had previously been opposed to the expedition, is prepared to support her husband if the helium issue can be resolved.

Mr Branson added: "We would return to Marrakech. It is the ideal setting. The Moroccan Government has already invited the Virgin team."

Mr Branson paid tribute to the courage of Alex Ritchie, 52, the last-minute stand-in who clambered on top of the capsule at 6,000ft to dump the cylinders and halt Challenger's precipitous descent.

Mr Branson said: "He is even cooler than I thought. If anyone was going to get the cylinders undone it was Alex. He did it in temperatures of -60. I think he saved our lives."

Asked his thoughts at the time, he said: "It is hard to be confident when you are heading for the ground at speeds of up to 2,000ft a minute. I remember thinking, 'If we get out of this alive, I will never do it again'. Three hours later, when we were sitting in the spectacular Sahara, I was not

so sure." Mr Ritchie, a mechanical engineer, said: "I have a well-developed sense of preservation. But I was glad it was dark and I could not see the ground. I might have fumbled it. In a moment of crisis you do not think about the consequences."

Mr Branson denied reports that the balloon had consumed too much helium on take-off. But he confirmed that early into the flight over the Atlas mountains they had been alerted by technicians on the ground that they had omitted to unlock the safety mechanism to release the propane gas burners if they had needed to offload ballast.

Per Lindstrand, the second member of the crew, who designed and built the balloon, said: "The safety coupling was a problem at the launch site. It may have been human error."

Mr Branson, who has ploughed millions of pounds into two failed circumnavigation attempts, made a relatively inexpensive mistake on board when he dumped the crew's food and emergency supplies. He said: "I have just discovered there was £2,000 [about £1,200] in one of the emergency packs. It's now lying somewhere in the desert."

The crew has been invited to the launch in Switzerland at the weekend of the Breitling Orbiter balloon, which is also attempting to circumnavigate



Mr Branson paying tribute to Alex Ritchie, who risked his life to save the balloon

the globe. Mr Branson said: "We will be delighted to be there. If they beat us to it, I will take my hat off to them. But we might try to do it even faster next year."

At the end of the press conference, Mr Ritchie was embarrassed to be presented

by the Breitling company with one of their £2,000 watches. He had said the day before that he had thrown his out of the balloon in the race to lose ballast. "It was just a wind-up," he sheepishly confessed.

Mr Branson paid tribute to the round-the-world yachts-

man, Tony Bullimore, who was found alive yesterday in the Southern Ocean. "He is typical of the same British spirit of adventure which drove the Virgin Challenger crew," he said.

Leading article, page 21

Ballooning craze takes flight at auction

By Dalya Alberge

A PRIVATE collection of 18th-century fans, sewing kits and boxes decorated with images that reflect a ballooning craze which took off in the 1780s is to be sold this month.

The collection, to be auctioned on January 30, traces the history of the sport. A French portable wooden sundial commemorates June 4, 1783, when the Montgolfier Brothers first demonstrated a balloon, and a French ivory snuff box shows the first human flight in November that year by the Marquis d'Arlandes, who persuaded Louis XVI that he should be allowed to make the trip. The king had decreed that only condemned men should take such a risk. The objects are estimated at about £1,800 each.

Although a law in Paris forbade any man from taking "young female persons" in a balloon "in case anything untoward happened", the sport remained fashionable for about 18 months. Alexander Crumh Ewing of Bonhams, the auctioneer, explained that as the craze died, "the sewings were discarded. Today, they are extremely rare and we are fortunate that this collection is so rich in contemporary works."

Tonsil test offers early diagnosis of beef-link CJD

By Jeremy Laurence, Health Correspondent

SCIENTISTS believe they have found a simple test to give early diagnosis of the new strain of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, which is linked to eating beef. At present, CJD can only be diagnosed with certainty only after death.

The discovery will show whether the disease is spreading and which patients with early signs of dementia would respond to treatment. The test involves removing a small piece of tissue from the tonsils, an easy and safe procedure which can be done under local anaesthetic.

Professor John Collinge and colleagues at Imperial College and St Mary's Hospital, London, report in The Lancet that they have found a prion protein characteristic of the new strain of CJD in a tonsil sample taken from a 35-year-old woman who died of the disease.

The prion protein was discovered by the same team last October in the brains of people who died with the disease. It provided evidence of a link with eating beef because it showed that the new variant of CJD is different from other

versions but virtually identical to BSE. Although there is currently no treatment for CJD, confirming the diagnosis is important because in its early stages the symptoms are similar to other degenerative diseases which are treatable. The only available means of diagnosis before death is by brain biopsy, a dangerous and unreliable operation to remove a piece of brain tissue.

Professor Collinge said it was too soon to predict how many cases of the new strain of CJD there would be, but if an epidemic ensued a simple diagnostic test would be essential to monitor its progress. He added: "In the long term we might be able to treat CJD. If that happens, we don't want to wait till they are demented before they get it. We would want to treat them early."

In sheep, the tonsil test can reveal the presence of scrapie, similar to BSE in cows and CJD in humans, before symptoms appear. If the human tonsil test revealed CJD before symptoms were apparent, it could reassure anyone who had eaten beef.

BMA calls for ban on commercial surgeries

By Jeremy Laurence

PHARMACIES and supermarkets should be stopped from running GP services to save the NHS from privatisation, doctors' leaders said.

The British Medical Association said it would oppose government plans to allow commercial organisations to employ family doctors because it could put patients at risk from exploitation. It is to seek an amendment to the Primary Care Bill, now before Parliament, to ensure that only NHS trusts and GP practices are permitted to run GP services.

Under the Bill, published last month, commercial firms can apply to set up and run such services, provided they have the backing of an NHS trust or family doctor. The first moves are expected from NHS trusts, but ministers are keen to encourage maximum innovation and have said they will consider all proposals.

Unichem, one of Britain's biggest pharmacy chains, is the first commercial organisation to declare an interest in the scheme. It has said it wants to set up one-stop health shops combining GP services, minor surgery, chiropody and pharmacy.

On Wednesday, the council of the BMA voted to protect the NHS from "direct or indirect privatisation". Dr Ian Bogle, chairman of the GPs' committee said that the aim of helping patients could conflict with a commercial organisation's need to make a profit for shareholders.

The Health Department said: "We have made it quite clear throughout that there is no intention of privatising the NHS. What we are looking at are services that would be delivered under the auspices of the NHS." No supermarket had expressed interest and there was no indication that any was likely to.

Leukaemia linked to nuclear discharges

By Nick Nuttall, Environment Correspondent

FRENCH government scientists have found a link between leukaemia and children and mothers who played on the beach near a nuclear reprocessing plant in Normandy.

The findings challenge current thinking that so-called leukaemia clusters around nuclear stations had nothing to do with radioactive discharges into the environment. The research has emerged from studies of 21 cases of

leukaemia in people aged under 25 around the La Hague plant. The findings are published in the British Medical Journal.

The researchers found that the development of leukaemia was linked with visits to the beach and eating local shellfish. It was found that children who visited beaches near La Hague at least once a month were three times more likely to develop leukaemia.

Small law firms lose out as face of profession changes

By Frances Gibb, Legal Correspondent

THE earnings of small firms of solicitors have failed to keep pace with inflation, statistics gathered by the Law Society show. Some sole practitioners made as little as £21,000 a year.

The Law Society research, which also discovered that one in three solicitors were women, found most weathered the recession, with the bigger firms faring best: those with 11 to 25 partners had a 13 per cent increase in profits in 1995 over 1994.

The total turnover of the 8,000 law firms in England and Wales rose by 4.5 per cent in 1994/95 to nearly £7 billion

with solicitors accounting for £1.1 billion of earnings from overseas. But it was not enough to keep pace with inflation and the profession's growth, so solicitors' earnings and profits fell.

The statistics highlight the stark gap between the earnings of big commercial firms and small or one-person firms in England and Wales.

For sole practitioners, the average profit was £46,000, but one in four made £21,000 or less. In firms of two to four partners, the average profit per partner was £32,000 but 25 per cent of partners earned £30,000 or less. For those with

five to ten partners, or 11 to 25 partners, average profits were £66,000 and £88,000 respectively. Firms of 26 to 80 partners showed average profits per equity partner in 1994/95 of £116,000.

Since 1986, the total number of solicitors with practising certificates has grown 42 per cent. But the number of women has risen 188 per cent.

The statistics show the rapid growth in the profession, by half, 45 per cent, have been qualified for less than 10 years. The average age of a woman solicitor is 35 compared with 43 for men.

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We now have chilling evidence that these statements were lies.

Well before they were made, Britain's Lord Chancellor wrote the letter shown opposite to Heath emphasising that in his view "the surrenders of sovereignty involved are serious..." and "...ought to be brought out into the open now..."

He pointed out that Parliament would have to surrender to Europe the power to legislate. That European law would be the supreme law of this land. That we would lose our sovereign power to make treaties. And that this would lead to a "fully federal state".

Yet Heath and his close colleagues chose to purposely mislead the British public.

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McCartney hits back at widow over song sale

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

SIR Paul McCartney accused the BBC yesterday of trying to make The Beatles look like "widow-beaters" in an increasingly acrimonious dispute over the ownership of lyrics he wrote 30 years ago.

The musician, who was knighted in the new year honours list, reacted angrily to last night's *Watchdog* programme in which the widow of the band's road manager criticised Sir Paul for seeking an injunction banning her from selling a piece of paper on which he had scribbled the words to *With A Little Help From My Friends*.

Mal Evans was killed by police in Los Angeles in 1976 after brandishing an imitation gun. His widow, Lily, 60, had hoped that the sale of the

document, which she found among his belongings, would make up to £80,000 at Sotheby's last year. However, Sir Paul, who is believed to be worth about £400 million, obtained an injunction halting the sale and argued that Mrs Evans was trying to sell property that did not belong to her.

He said in a statement yesterday that he would make sure Mrs Evans and her family were well provided for, but he wanted the lyrics back. "The programme is trying to make The Beatles out to be widow-beaters. Nothing could be further from the truth."

"I would like to meet Mrs Evans and discuss this and come to some arrangement to see that she is taken care of

and that the lyrics are returned. They were never Mal's lyrics and therefore any relative of Mal's, such as Mrs Evans, does not have the right of ownership to these lyrics.

"I am surprised that *Watchdog* is doing this report. I thought *Watchdog* was normally on the side of people who have been ripped off."

"Those song lyrics were picked up by Mal Evans as part of his duties as a Beatles employee. They were held in trust by him on behalf of The Beatles. I don't wish to cause any trouble for Mrs Evans or for her children, whom I remember fondly, but I do feel strongly that these original manuscripts should be returned to their owners."

Mrs Evans told *Watchdog*:

"I don't know why he would want to do that. It wouldn't be for the money and he lets other people sell, so I don't know why he would want to stop me. He was a good friend of Mal's and you would think that if I was in Paul's shoes I would want to be helpful, rather than hinder."

She said that her husband, who was The Beatles' road manager throughout the

1960s, had left her without a pension. "If he had remained in his Post Office job I would have been better looked after."

Mrs Evans's son, Gary, said that his father and Sir Paul had been "best buddies". He added: "I think of everything Dad did for him. He'd be on 24 hours' notice and he'd do anything for Paul, he loved the guy. I don't think he can have much of a conscience."

Geoff Baker, Sir Paul's publicist, said that approaches had been made to Mrs Evans through her lawyers and one of Sir Paul's personal assistants had visited her to make a generous financial offer. "It is mystifying why she is doing this. Paul has said that, if she is facing hardship, The Beatles will make sure she and her children are taken care of." He added that the band

had paid off her mortgage after her husband died and that she had made money through sales of other Beatles memorabilia.

Watchdog said that Sir Paul had refused to respond to its questions about the proposed sale, but Mr Baker said that no approaches had been made through him.

Pop, page 34



Paul McCartney with Mal Evans, who kept the scribbled lyrics. His widow, Lily, hoped to sell them for £80,000

Bupa faces trading ban in Ireland

Michael Noonan, the Irish Health Minister, threatened to ban Bupa from operating in Ireland if it did not alter its healthcare policies. He claimed that they discriminated against the sick and elderly. Under Irish law all health insurers must abide by a "community rating" and charge a healthy 25-year-old the same as a frail 85-year-old. Bupa was set up in the Republic in November in opposition to the state-owned Voluntary Health Insurance.

RAF jet crashes

An RAF fighter pilot ejected from his Harrier GR7 as it crashed on the runway at its home base in Germany. The pilot broke his leg in the incident at the Laarbruch airbase on the German-Dutch border, but nobody else was hurt. The Harrier had no weapons on board.

Boy, 10, charged

A ten-year-old boy has been charged with affray and wounding with intent over an incident in which a woman's eye was pierced with a knife outside a primary school in Doncaster, south Yorkshire. The boy was bailed to reappear before magistrates in February 13.

N-plant fire

A nuclear reactor has been shut down after a small fire at Heysham power station near Morecambe in Lancashire. Nuclear Electric said the fire, which started after an oil leak in a turbine, had been put out immediately. The reactor would remain closed pending repairs and an investigation.

Shops dividend

Council tax in Edinburgh may be reduced after Marks & Spencer agreed to buy the city centre from the city council for £122 million. The council may be able to cut the tax for band D properties by £17 or it could spend the money on education and transport projects.

Protesters bailed

Three road protesters accused of criminal damage to the garden of Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, at Cookham, Berkshire, have been freed on bail by Maidenhead magistrates. Seven other protesters will appear before magistrates next month.

300th millionaire

Malcolm Coomber, 49, an accountant from Sutton, Surrey, became the National Lottery's 300th millionaire since its launch more than two years ago after sharing the week's jackpot with ten others. He won £1,016,676. He plans to buy a red Ferrari.

TV detective returns Betjeman's long-lost wandering ghost to the screen

By ALEXANDRA FREAN
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT



Straw-hatted apparition

FIVE travel films by Sir John Betjeman, believed to have been lost for more than 30 years, have been tracked down after two years of detective work by a television producer. He set out on his quest after stumbling across part of the footage in a warehouse attic.

The films, in which the former Poet Laureate makes a plea to save

the beauty of small English towns, are described by Gerry Dawson, who found them, as a "classic insight into English social and cultural history".

Mr Dawson, a producer for the ITV company HTV, began by looking through film cans found in the disused HTV scenery warehouse in Cardiff for anything of interest. "The cans were so rusty that the only way to open them was by banging them on a concrete floor, but the

film inside was in remarkably good condition," he said. "I put it in an old viewing machine and saw that there were shots of Weston-super-Mare. Suddenly a bloke wearing a straw hat appeared and I recognised Betjeman."

Made in 1962, the films mainly offer Betjeman's idiosyncratic views on seven West Country towns — Devizes, Northleek, Swindon, Chippenham, Crewkerne, Sherborne and Sidmouth. He told viewers:

"I'm not a mad preservationist, but I hate to see the heart of an old town left to go to ruin. No one wants slums preserved, but thousands of old cottages, condemned and dead, could so easily be repaired."

At that time sound was recorded on separate reels and, because the soundtrack was not available for the first reel he watched, Mr Dawson did not know what he had discovered. Research led him to Jonathan Stedall, who had directed Betje-

man's television films in the Sixties. He had kept the scripts, from which Mr Dawson discovered that there were five films in the series. The Devizes footage was traced to a blacksmith, an amateur historian, who had kept it behind a bookcase. More was found in film libraries and another old HTV building. The films, some with soundtracks recorded by Nigel Hawthorne, will be shown on Channel 4 for three weeks, starting tonight.

Frozen fields lift prices of fresh vegetables

THE freezing weather is hitting supplies of fresh vegetables, especially cauliflowers, spring greens, Brussels sprouts and leeks, though prices are still said to be average for the time of year. Main-crop potatoes are back up to 10 to 14p a pound. There are, though, good supplies of broccoli, courgettes and salad items imported from Spain. Some species of fish are also in short supply, but whiting is a good buy at £1.10 to £1.65 a pound according to size. Announced promotions include: Asda: fresh pork chops £3.99 kg, avocados 99p for five, onions 32p for 1.25kg, Sundina oranges £1.49 for 1.25kg, lychees 79p for 250g. Budgens: fresh whole chicken £3.29 for 1.9kg, smoked Dutch back bacon rashers £1.39 for 250g, large eggs 99p for 12, crumpets 28p for eight. Co-op (CWS): Bernard Matthews frozen crispy crumb turkey burgers 64p for 285g.

McCain Chippy chips 89p for 1.81kg. Harrods: Parma ham £3.79 for 100g, Vienna sausages 99p for 100g, French peas £5 for two 250g tins. Leach's pork chops £3.25 for six, fish and chips for two £1.99, coley filets £1.99 for 680g, peas 79p for 907g. Marks & Spencer: family-size Cumberland pie £2.49, salmon Cumberland pie £1.59 each, marinated gammon steak £1.99 pack. Safeway: rump steak £6.06 kg, six large chicken breast fillets £5.32 kg, chicken tikka masala £1.99 for 340g. Somerfield: pork loin chops £3.37 kg, smoked haddock fillet £3.72 kg, baking potatoes 9p lb, fine beans 68p for 250g. Waitrose: free-range chicken (1.9kg to 2.5kg) £2.99, North Atlantic, cooked and peeled prawns £1.49 for 115g.

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THE TIMES FRIDAY JANUARY 10 1997

Bupa facing trading ban in Ireland

...Bupa, the insurance giant, is facing a trading ban in Ireland...

RAF jet crash

...A Royal Air Force jet crashed in the Channel Islands...

Boy, 10, charged

...A 10-year-old boy has been charged with the murder of a girl...

screen

...The film 'The English Patient' is set to be screened...

lift prices at etables

...Supermarket prices are expected to rise...

Shops divide

...Retailers are split over the proposed changes...

Protesters hit

...Demonstrations against the new regulations...

500th million

...The company has reached a milestone...

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Harreds

Britain's 900,000-strong Indian community 'reinforces values and creates unbreakable bond'

Major woos Asian voters as campaign goes to Calcutta

FROM PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR, IN CALCUTTA

JOHN MAJOR blazed the election trail 5,000 miles from home yesterday when he used a speech here to make a barely veiled pitch for the million-plus Asian vote in Britain.

In a speech to the Confederation of Indian Industry before an audience of several thousand in a vast indoor sports stadium, the Prime Minister praised the 900,000-strong Indian community in Britain, speaking of its thrift, hard work and entrepreneurial flair.

He said the community reinforced British values such as the importance of the family, the need for a sound ethical framework to govern conduct and a belief in the ability to make life better for its children through education and enterprise. In schools, the health service, local government and Parliament, as well as in the private sector, the Indian community made an "important, thoughtful and highly appreciated contribution", Mr Major declared.

On his way to India, Mr Major said that although the election would be important when it came, the "normal activities of government must proceed". He was responding to MPs and ministers who have privately questioned whether he should be out of the country with the election effectively under way.

He has emphasised that the main purpose of his trip is to boost British trade — he is accompanied by more than 50 of Britain's leading industrial-

ists — and to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence. But he found it difficult from the moment he landed in Calcutta yesterday to get away from echoes of the domestic campaign.

Hundreds of people had turned out at an early hour to line the route into the city from the airport, and throughout the day he received a statesman's treatment. When he visited the Swinhoe Lane slum, renovated with British

‘The trip's main aim is to boost British trade and mark 50 years of independence’

aid money, Mr Major and his wife Norma were drummed in and serenaded out by residents blowing conch shells.

It felt almost like an election. He had begun the week with a row over beggars with Tony Blair. But here, hundreds of thousands of protesters had indirectly blamed him for Operation Sunshine, a hard-line move to clear the streets of illegal street traders. They claimed it was all done to coincide with his arrival and accused the authorities of allowing a new form of colonialism. It was claimed that the

hawkers had been removed with great brutality.

Then, in his speech to the biggest audience he has faced, Mr Major appeared to confirm that there was an electoral reason behind his trip, apart from the credit he believes he receives for being seen on the world stage.

He spoke of the huge contribution made by the Indian community, one that had prospered and widened. "As an integral part of British society they create an unbreakable bond between our countries."

The South Asian vote in Britain — people with origins in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh — is some 3 per cent of the population, making it easily the largest ethnic grouping. Labour calculates that in 12 of its top 60 target seats the Asian vote could be decisive. The two largest are in Ilford South and Slough.

Suspensions that Mr Major might use his trip to bolster the Asian vote had been fuelled by the disclosure that he is soon to address a meeting of the Asian community at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London.

Shortly after his arrival, Mr Major witnessed the signing of three joint ventures with Indian companies. He also announced that Britain would grant £41 million for primary education in West Bengal, and watched a few overs of a cricket match between Lancashire and Eastern Region.

Leading article, page 21



John Major and his wife, Norma, after being given flowers by a child in Calcutta

£50,000 pledged for research to save Bengal tiger

BY PHILIP WEBSTER AND NICK NUTTALL, ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

AN APPEAL to India to do more to save the threatened tiger was delivered by John Major in Calcutta yesterday.

More than half the world's 7,700 or so tigers in the wild live in the Indian forests, but their numbers are falling because poachers are slaughtering them and selling the carcasses for use in traditional medicine. The Prime Minister told the Confederation of Indian Industry that trade must have a heart and a conscience as well as a profit. He said: "I very much regret the sad fact that the tiger has become one of the most endangered animals in the world today."

British officials said that Britain was to give £50,000 to groups, researching ways to improve conservation methods. Mr Major welcomed the steps India was taking, but said that more needed to be done. Britain would continue to work with India and other countries to find a solution.

He added: "The tiger is a proud and glorious animal. We must ensure his survival so that our great grandchildren can enjoy his grace and power as much as we do."

The Indian tiger population, estimated at 3,000 to 4,000 animals, is down from about 40,000 at the beginning of the century. The race living on the Indian subcontinent is the Bengal tiger. Three races, the Caspian, the Bali and the Javan, are extinct. The last surviving races are the Bengal, the Indo-Chinese, the Sumatran, the South China and the Amur or Siberian. All tigers are protected.

under the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species. It bans trade in tiger parts, skins and bones. But the demand for tiger parts to supply the Chinese and oriental medicines trade has led to poaching throughout the 1990s. Booming human populations and their need for housing and farmland are also bringing the tiger increasingly into conflict with villagers.

India has 21 reserves specifically managed for tigers containing about a third of the remaining animals. They are also found in a further 80 protected areas. However, as new areas are added, some reserves are under threat. The key Melghat reserve is to be reduced in area by a third to accommodate more people.



Bengal tiger: not more than 4,000 in the wild

60 troops killed in Sri Lanka attack

FROM VILUTHA YAPA IN COLOMBO

SIXTY Sri Lankan soldiers were killed yesterday, and more than 200 injured when Tamil separatists attacked two army camps in Paranthan and Elephant Pass, northern Sri Lanka, military sources said.

They added that more than 500 terrorists from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were either wounded or killed in the pre-dawn attack, according to rebel sources.

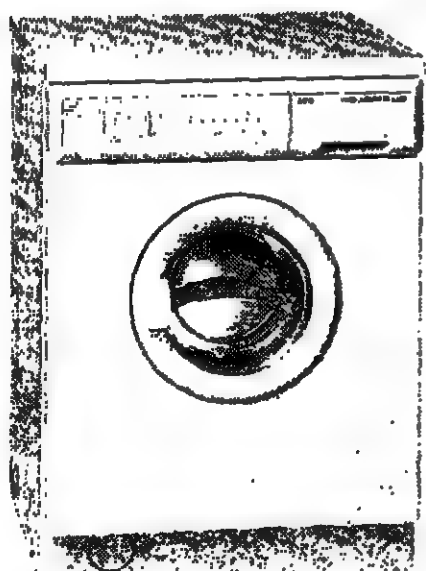
In addition to attacks from the land using heavy artillery, Tamils had turned up in boats. Army sources said they suspected that the heavy artillery used had been captured when the Tamils overran an army camp at Mullaitivu last

year, killing more than 1,000 soldiers.

Twenty-two seriously injured soldiers were flown yesterday to Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, for treatment. Military sources said the death toll could be much higher. The Tigers fled from northern territories attacked by Sri Lanka's armed forces last year.

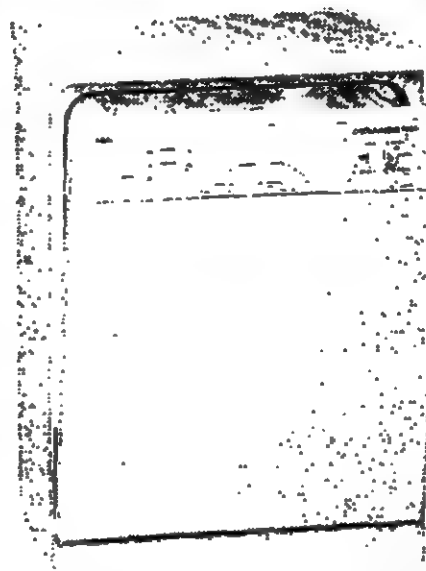
The attack took place as the Government was working on devolution plans. The Justice Minister has said the Government may hold a referendum if the opposition United National Party does not co-operate to achieve the majority needed to pass the legislation.

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Stars accuse Germany of persecuting Scientologists

FROM ROGER BOYES
IN BONN

AN OPEN LETTER TO HELMUT KOHL

Chairman of the German Federal Republic
Dear Chancellor Kohl:

DUSTIN HOFFMAN, Goldie Hawn and other Hollywood stars joined forces with top film producers, directors and writers yesterday to attack German discrimination against Scientologists, comparing Bonn's policies with Hitler's treatment of the Jews.

The broadside from Tinseltown came in an open letter to Helmut Kohl which the German Chancellor rejected yesterday. The 34 signatories, Herr Kohl said, "have no idea about Germany and do not want to learn about the country; otherwise they would never have dreamt up something like this."

The letter, published in a full-page advertisement in the *International Herald Tribune*, seemed to signal an all-out publicity offensive on behalf of the Scientologists. "We implore you to bring an end to this shameful pattern of organised persecution," the stars said. "It is a disgrace to the German nation."

The signatories said that they were not Scientologists. Film stars such as Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman and John Travolta, who are members of the Church of Scientology, have already protested about what they regard as persecution. But as German authorities consider whether to monitor Scientologists with the help of plainclothes police, and as Scientologists are excluded from some Civil Service jobs, so the anger of the Hollywood establishment has increased. "These acts are intolerable

in any country that conceives of itself as a modern democracy. This organised oppression is beginning to sound familiar... like the Germany of 1936, rather than 1996. It should be stopped — now, before it spreads and increases in virulence as it did before."

The letter was signed not only by Mr Hoffman and Ms Hawn, both of whom have films showing in German cinemas, but also by Oliver Stone, the director, Gore Vidal and Mario Puzo, the writers. Larry King, the CNN talkshow host, and producers such as Aaron Spelling and Cherry Lansing.

The appeal was directed to Herr Kohl partly because he is chairman of the Christian Democratic party, which has been the most energetic in combating Scientology. The youth wing of his party organised a boycott of the film *Mission Impossible* because its leading actor and co-producer was Cruise. Chick Corea, the American jazz pianist, had to cancel his performance at a state-sponsored concert in Stuttgart because of his association with Scientology.

The protesting Hollywood stars compared such boycotts and bans with the Nazi book-burnings of the 1930s. Edmund Stoiber, Bavaria's conservative Prime Minister, has described Scientology as a "subversive, intolerant, racist organisation that wants to replace our society with a totalitarian regime". From last November, applicants for jobs in Bavaria's Civil Service have been questioned about their links to Scientology and are rejected if they are associated with the group.

Other regional politicians have also accused the sect of being a danger to German society and have called for the group to be put under surveillance or even banned. However, the country's 16 regional

interior ministers have stopped short of such drastic measures and have called for detailed reports on the sect's activities before making a decision.

There are about 30,000 members of the "Scientology Church Germany" which is not accepted by the German authorities as a legitimate church or religion. In 1995 a court in Kassel ruled that Scientology was a business organisation. "The spiritual content and the outside appearance of the community should reflect its religious nature. But this is not the case with the Scientology Church Germany, which in reality is engaged in trade," the court ruling said.

Both sides in this increasingly acrimonious dispute invoke the Nazi past. Ursula Caberta, director of a Hamburg-based taskforce investigating Scientology, said that before she got involved in the project she used to think "if you are stupid enough to believe in Scientology, that's your problem."

"But now I truly believe if you analyse [L. Ron] Hubbard [the founder of Scientology] and his writings, you will see that he is promoting the idea of a totalitarian state and of the *Übermensch* [the superman]. Instead of talking about Aryans, as Hitler did, he is talking about Scientologists. Because of our history we have to be much more careful about this kind of thing spreading."

The star-studded letter writers approached the problem from the opposite corner yesterday. "In the Germany of the 1930s," they wrote, "Hitler



Tom Cruise, left, whose film was boycotted, and Chick Corea, who had to cancel a Stuttgart concert appearance



made religious intolerance official government policy. Jews were at first marginalised, then excluded from many activities, then vilified and ultimately subjected to unspeakable horrors... in the 1930s, it was the Jews. Today it is the Scientologists."

When Cruise and other Scientologist stars made similar links in newspaper advertisements last year, Ignaz Bubis, the head of the Jewish community in Germany, described such claims as offensive and insulting to millions of Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

The US State Department also distanced itself from the pro-Scientology advertisements, saying: "This is an outrageous charge against the

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Coup for church as studios fear box-office boycott

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

THE Church of Scientology's latest broadside is ostensibly a major coup in its international quest for credibility, enlisting a brace of powerful Hollywood luminaries with no direct link to the group to support its persecution claims.

Closer study of the list of signatories to yesterday's open letter reveals, however, that many have close and lucrative ties to the world's two best-known Scientologists — the top box-office draws Tom Cruise and John Travolta.

Dustin Hoffman, Aaron Spelling, the television producer, and Sidney Sheinberg, the former Universal Studios' chief, are among high-profile Jewish signatories to back the letter's claims. But many others appear to have feared films starring Travolta and Cruise — and his wife and fellow Scientologist Nicole Kidman — might be boycotted by German cinemagoers who represent a third of Hollywood's booming European market.

As the star of *Mission Impossible*, which took \$180 million in America alone, and of the current hit about an idealistic sports agent, *Jerry Maguire*, \$83 million and counting, Cruise, 35, is acknowledged as the world's most bankable actor.

Six of the executives most intimately involved in the multimillion-dollar industry surrounding him have signed the letter to the *International Herald Tribune*: John Calley, head of Sony Pictures, which is distributing *Jerry Maguire*; Sherry Lansing, head of Paramount Pictures, which released *Mission Impossible*; Terry Semel, head of Warner Bros, which will distribute Cruise's next film; Jack Rapke and Rick Nicita, senior agents who oversee his career at the Creative Artists' Agency; and Paula Wagner, his partner in his own production company.

Ms Wagner is thought to be a Scientologist. The other five, not known for publicly supporting Scientology, may be observing the first rule of business in Hollywood's cut-throat environment — it never pays to alienate a star on a hot streak.

The same appears to be true of Fred Westheimer, Travolta's agent at the William Morris Agency, who also signed the letter. Travolta's meteoric professional resurrection since his star turn in *Pulp Fiction* in 1994 has included such unlikely hits as *Phenomenon* and *Michael*, currently tied at number one with *Jerry Maguire* in the American box-office charts.

Phenomenon, about a countryman experiencing heightened awareness before dying from a brain tumour, took \$104 million in America and included thinly disguised paeans to "clear" thinking — a core aim of Scientology.

Other stars known to be practising Scientologists include Kirstie Alley, Mimi Rogers (Cruise's ex-wife), Sonny Bono, Nancy Cartwright and the jazz pianist Chick Corea.

The 40-year-old church, recently suffered a legal blow when a long-running lawsuit against *Time* magazine over a wounding 1991 exposé was dismissed by a US federal court.

Fast-growing sect wins credibility in Britain

BY RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

SCIENTOLOGY, which was brought to Britain in 1954, is gaining up to 4,000 recruits a year, and now has more than 100,000 members in this country.

The religion has been gaining credibility and acquired significant new recognition when, under new Home Office guidelines published at the end of last year, Scientology leaders were granted the right to enter the country as recognised religious ministers. Although the sect has so far failed to attract celebrity support as it has done in the United States, it has a small church in central London similar to that frequented by the Hollywood stars in Los Angeles. The London church, one of three established in the capital and

11 nationwide, was set up to serve British celebrities.

Scientology began in 1950 with the publication of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, by L. Ron Hubbard, who believed a person is neither a body nor a mind, but a spiritual being. The sect claims to be a religion in the most traditional sense, dealing with the person as spirit rather than the product of material circumstances.

The church has in the past been defined as a cult by the Home Office, and in 1968 was deemed "socially harmful". Members were barred from entering Britain to study or minister.

The group has also applied for charitable status, and a decision is pending.

Kohl rejects vote on euro in face of record jobless toll

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

HELMUT KOHL, the German Chancellor, yesterday ruled out the possibility of holding a referendum on economic and monetary union (EMU) although nearly three-quarters of Germans say they favour such a vote before giving up the mark.

"I'm a committed supporter of representative democracy," he said. Germany had negative experiences with referendums in the interwar Weimar Republic and to introduce it now "would lead quickly to another kind of republic".

Herr Kohl was responding to an opinion poll which showed that more than half of Germans are against introducing the single currency in January 1999. The survey revealed that only 15 per cent believed that the euro would be as strong as the mark.

The German constitution makes no provision for holding referendums but pressure has been mounting to amend

it to enable a popular vote on the euro. The poll, conducted by the Forsa Institute and published yesterday, showed that 73 per cent of Germans want a referendum.

But the Chancellor, in his traditional new year news conference, thundered: "I am against it in principle."

No other country in Europe, he said, voted as often as the Germans: polls in 16 regional states occur throughout the political calendar, giving Germans the chance to air their views on the shift to EMU.

Herr Kohl said he had little doubt that Germans would in any case vote for the euro if a referendum were held. "We have a clear majority in the business community," he said.

The euro's potential for creating jobs is a matter of dispute. The arguments could intensify after figures released yesterday showed record post-war unemployment last month of 4.13 million. The

trade union federation said the true number was nearer seven million. But Herr Kohl declared that it was possible to halve unemployment by the millennium.

He also echoed — though more diplomatically — the comments by Klaus Kinkel, his Foreign Minister, about the need for Britain to decide its future European course. Herr Kinkel's comments angered British Eurosceptics.

"I know Klaus Kinkel was criticised in the British media and I have no intention of meddling in the internal affairs of Austria... er, sorry, England," Herr Kohl said. But Britain had to hold its election by May and "this placed it right in the middle of the critical talks on the inter-governmental conference."

As far as he understood British politics, there were many competing views on the EU. "So this election is a clear vote of Britain's destiny."



An anti-riot policeman is fed with a biscuit by a young woman during a student protest in Belgrade yesterday.

Belgrade opposition keeps up pressure

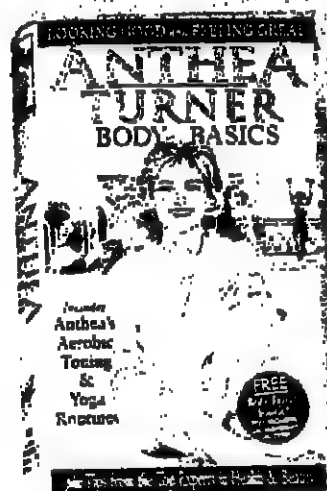
FROM ANTHONY LOYD IN BELGRADE

THE partial climbdown this week by President Milosevic over election results in Nis, Serbia's second city, has failed to lift the pressure on his Socialist Government — the centre of Belgrade remains paralysed and there are escalating demonstrations in 42 other towns and cities.

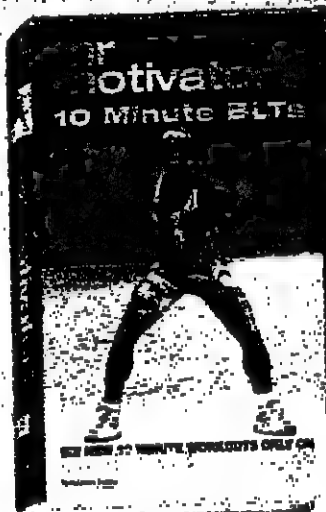
"Milosevic's gesture means nothing as far as we are concerned," said Vuk Draskovic, leader of the Zajedno opposition coalition. "He tried to steal Belgrade and his move over Nis is just an attempt to buy time."

Nis is the dominant city of southern Serbia and a traditional industrial bastion of Socialist support. The second round of elections in November gave the opposition a clear majority and 41 seats. The results were revoked by Mr Milosevic, but partially reinstated two days ago as part of a conciliatory feint when state TV announced that Zajedno's victory in Nis gave the opposition 37 seats.

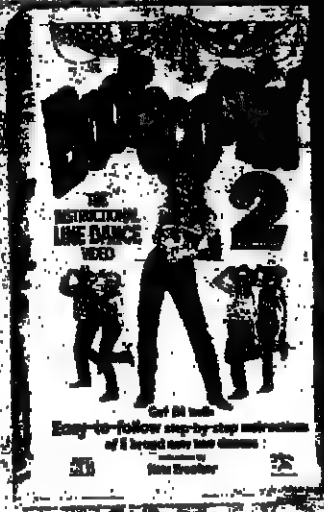
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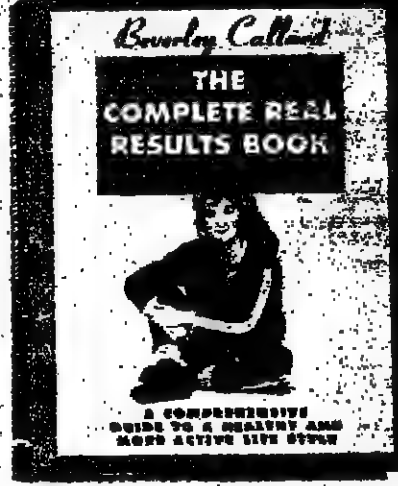
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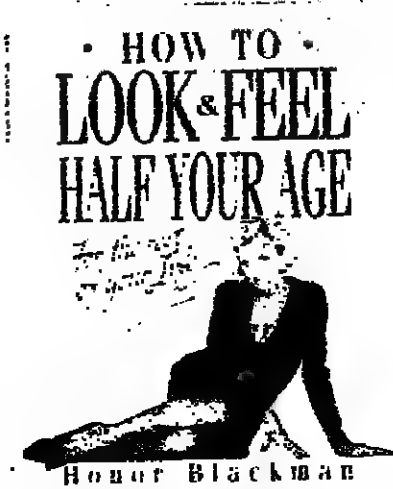
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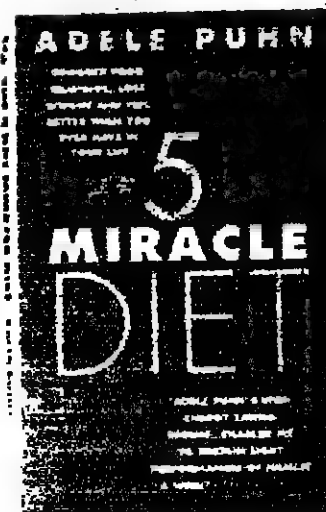
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Date set for Nigerian elections

Abuja: Nigerians are due to go to the polls on March 15 in the country's first municipal elections on a party basis since General Sani Abacha seized power in November 1993, the electoral commission said yesterday. Five registered parties will field candidates.

The elections should have taken place in the last quarter of 1996 under a phased programme for the transfer of power from General Abacha's military leadership to a democratically elected presidency. However, the commission said the delay would not threaten the date by which the transfer should be completed — October 1, 1998. (AFP)

Dhaka leader freed from jail

Dhaka: Hossain Mohammad Ershad, the former President of Bangladesh, who was freed from jail yesterday, said he would soon resume an active political life. He denied opposition claims that his bail on corruption charges was the result of a deal between his Janata Party and the Awami League of Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister. (Reuters)

Visa snag delays Rwanda tribunal

Arusha: The United Nations tribunal on Rwanda's 1994 genocide opened in the Tanzanian city but was adjourned because 31 witnesses had not arrived from Rwanda to testify against Jean-Paul Akayesu, a Hutu former government official. They had experienced visa problems. Almost a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus died in 1994. (Reuters)

Russian space monkey dies

Moscow: Multik, one of two Russian macaque monkeys that were wired to electrodes in scientific experiments during a two-week space mission that ended on Tuesday, died in an accident at a Moscow research centre unrelated to the flight, the Tass news agency said. (Reuters)

Here's licking at you, kid

Washington: The late actor Humphrey Bogart is to have a US postage stamp dedicated to him next year, the third in a Legends of Hollywood series after Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. The stamp image is to be based on a poster advertising the 1946 film, *The Big Sleep*. (AP)

Nile flourish by Mubarak

Toshka, Egypt: President Mubarak of Egypt yesterday launched a controversial plan to use Nile water to make the Western Desert bloom.

On the banks of the lake behind the Aswan High Dam, Mr Mubarak detonated a symbolic explosion at the site of what Egypt says will be the biggest pumping station in the world. Within about four years,

Embattled Mobutu flies back to France

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

PRESIDENT MOBUTU of Zaire flew back to France for medical consultations yesterday, three weeks after he returned home vowing to crush the rebel uprising that has plunged his country into chaos.

Mr Mobutu had spent four months in Europe recuperating from cancer surgery as the Rwandan-backed rebels advanced in eastern Zaire. He returned to Kinshasa on December 17.

After reshuffling his Government and the army high command and announcing an imminent counter-attack on the rebels, he announced on Wednesday night that he was returning to his villa on the Côte d'Azur. Zairean officials would not say how long he planned to stay, but Paris has issued him with an extendable three-month visa. After arriving in Nice by private plane, Mr Mobutu, 66, and his retinue of family members, servants and bodyguards drove in a convoy of 11 vehicles to his luxury residence, the Villa del Mare, in the nearby town of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. The President underwent an operation for prostate cancer in Switzerland last August, but the Swiss authorities have refused to renew his visa.

Presidential aides said the reasons for Mr Mobutu's return were entirely medical, but with hundreds of European mercenaries reported to be preparing to back the disorganised Zairean Army in a counter-attack on rebel positions, his departure comes at a critical moment. Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, has promised to oust Zaire's ruler of 31 years and Mr Mobutu has refused to negotiate with the rebels.

His unexpected return may be seen as a sign that Mr Mobutu believes his troops have little immediate hope of overcoming the highly trained and well-equipped rebels, with or without help from mercenaries.



Mobutu returning for "medical reasons"

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Hormones 'tainted with CJD' given to French children

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

STATE pharmaceutical officials in France knowingly distributed growth hormones to children that could cause the fatal Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), the human variant of "mad cow" disease, according to an investigation by a French weekly magazine.

As many as 1,000 children may have been infected by the tainted growth-drugs in 1985 and at least 40 have since died, according to *L'Express*.

Marie-Odile Bertella-Geffroy, the investigating magistrate, has reportedly launched a formal legal investigation into four doctors and researchers on suspicion of involuntary homicide. In a case with disturbing parallels to France's politically explosive scandal, dating from the same year, over blood tainted with the AIDS virus.

L'Express cited a court re-

port alleging that about 20,000 hormonal pills to combat dwarfism in children were distributed by pharmaceutical officials without first being treated to eliminate the prion, or infectious agent that can cause CJD.

Destroying the pills, containing possibly infectious hormones, would have meant losses of about \$5.5 million (\$70,000 per doctor at the Pharmacie Centrale des Hôpitaux were anxious to save money, according to *L'Express*.

In 1985, health officials distributed blood stocks contaminated with the AIDS virus, after refusing to spend money on technology from the United States to treat the blood. At least 1,200 haemophilic victims were infected and 400 later died, leading to the conviction of four senior

health officials and a compensation bill of more than \$5 billion. Three former Cabinet ministers have been charged with poisoning in that case.

Hervé Gaymard, France's Health Minister, promised a full inquiry into the allegations and said that prosecutions would be brought if warranted. He said the drugs, using hormones extracted from the pituitary glands of corpses, were no longer in use and had been replaced by synthetic hormones. *L'Express* said the hormones were taken from corpses at hospitals specialising in contagious diseases and senile dementia.

Jean-Claude Job, the president of France's Pituitary Institute in 1985, and Fernand Dray, the research director at the Pasteur Institute, are among those under investigation.



One of the rebels holding hostages at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima

Siege rebels in 'safe passage' talks with Lima

FROM GABRIELLA GAMINI IN LIMA

THE Peruvian Government is negotiating a safe passage for the 20 Marxist rebels who are holding 74 hostages inside the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima.

This emerged yesterday after Vladimiro Montesinos, Peru's intelligence chief and right-hand man to President Fujimori, held talks with imprisoned leaders of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA).

It appears that the Government sees the only chance of a negotiated settlement to the 22-day siege in talks with the leaders. It is offering safe passage to the hostage-takers to any country that will have them — possibly Cuba — in exchange for the release of the hostages.

Senor Montesinos, who is rarely seen or heard in public, runs the intelligence services and the military. President Fujimori admits that he rarely takes major decisions without him.

Montesinos has been talking to the MRTA leadership in prison to negotiate safe passage for the terrorists who are inside the Japanese Ambassador's residence holding hostages," said an intelligence source.

Nestor Cerpa, 44, the veteran guerrilla who is commanding the 20 heavily-armed rebels holding the hostages, is the only top leader not behind bars.

His army of young rebels, including two teenage girls, are possibly all that is left of the group. Their assault on the Japanese Ambassador's home seems a last-ditch attempt to free some of his friends and his girlfriend, who is among the jailed rebels.

Peruvian military commanders led by General Nicolas Hermosa are pushing for a military solution to the siege. But the Government is still seeking a peaceful way out, under pressure from the Japanese.

Britain accused of negligence in 'mad cow' crisis

FROM CHARLES BRENNER IN BRUSSELS

BRITISH handling of the BSE epidemic is a long tale of negligence and attempts to blackmail the European Commission, according to an inquiry by the European Parliament.

In a final report to be issued next week, a parliamentary committee charges Britain with bad faith in its management of the disease since 1988. The cross-party committee, which has been hearing evidence from British and European Union officials since last autumn, also accuses the Brussels Commission of failing in its duty by accepting the British line, playing down the gravity of the epidemic and placing the farm trade above public health.

The findings of the inquiry, which is the first by the parliament using powers it received under the Maastricht treaty, were dismissed by British officials as widely expected. The inquiry has no power to apply sanctions, but its findings are prompting anger around the Continent.

Le Soir of Brussels said the report had confirmed "the incredible British lack of fair play" over the "mad cow" affair. Bad publicity over the inquiry's findings will not help Britain's drive to win a partial lifting of the beef export embargo from herds certified to be BSE-free.

The inquiry's conclusions,

drafted by Manuel Medina, a Spanish Socialist MEP, are to be endorsed by the 19-member committee in Strasbourg after an appearance by Jacques Santer, the Commission President, next week. The report, which may be revised before its release, stops short of recommending a no-confidence vote in the Commission. However, a minority of members, led by Jose Happort, a Belgian MEP, is calling for such a move.

A list of 13 alleged British failings includes the attempt to win an end to the embargo by blocking EU business last spring. That amounted to "an abuse of its rights and blackmailing of the Community institutions by the UK". Britain had exerted pressure on the Commission over BSE for the past six years, refusing to allow veterinary inspections in the early 1990s and using British officials and scientists to swing decisions in London's favour, it said.

Since the EU's scientific committee advising on BSE had been dominated by, and usually chaired by, Britons, "it is logical to have doubts about their powers of arbitration and capacity to be impartial," Senior Medina's report said.

The big rise in the export of British animal-based feed after the national ban amounted to "a failure to comply with the principle of co-operation that must exist between all member states", it said. Britain had also refused to listen to scientists who judged the epidemic to be more serious than officially acknowledged. The committee was scathing about British officials who appeared before it, including Sir Keith Meldrum, the Chief Veterinary Officer, and it deplored the refusal of Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, to give evidence. The Commission's consistent policy of playing down the consequences of the epidemic "could even be interpreted at certain times as a policy of disinformation", it said.



Hogg: refusal to give evidence deplored

Israel tension high as bombs injure 13

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

ARAB-Israeli tension increased dangerously last night after at least two explosions rocked a southern district of Tel Aviv, injuring 13 people and raising fears of a new Palestinian terrorist campaign inside Israel.

Although there was no immediate confirmation of the cause of the explosions, Avigdor Kahalani, the Interior Security Minister, said that Arab terrorism was a possible cause. He also said no motive had been ruled out and it was possible that the blasts were caused by criminals.

The bombs were in rubbish bins — one near a cinema screening sex films and the other close by in an area largely inhabited by immigrant workers and known for its high levels of prostitution. The attack came as talks designed to bring about an Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron appeared to be stalled. The blasts caused panic in the streets and caused immediate concern that they may

have been intended as retaliation for last week's attempted massacre of Palestinians in the market area of Hebron. The attack by an off-duty Israeli soldier injured six Arabs.

In recent days Israel has also been accused by Syria of being behind a huge bus bomb attack in Damascus last week, which left 13 people dead and 40 wounded. The right-wing Israeli Government has denied the charges.

As the violence flared again and in the wake of the Syrian accusations, a leading member of Israel's ruling Likud Party called for Israel to attack Syrian targets in Lebanon. The demand from Uzi Landau came after attacks on Wednesday in occupied southern Lebanon in which one Israeli soldier was killed and eight were wounded.

Mr Landau said: "A price must be exacted from the Syrian and Lebanese Governments for this kind of situation, for if we do not, terrorism will increase."

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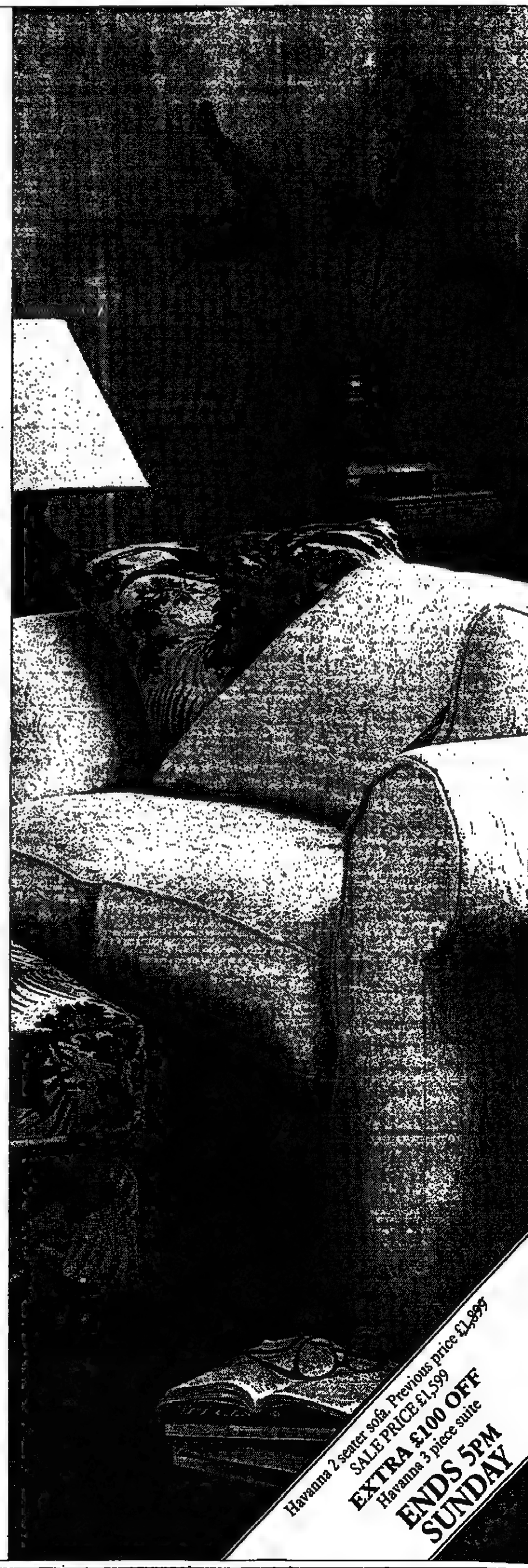
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**FROM TOM RHODES
IN WASHINGTON**

Although investigators have yet to prove any link to the Oklahoma bombing, this week's trial in Columbus is certain to rekindle fears about racist hate groups.

BY DAVID WATTS AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

"If they don't appear tomorrow morning we will have to

On Wednesday the ministers of interior, justice and labour threatened "stern measures" against strikes that have been declared illegal. Earlier President Kim Young-Sam had ordered the Government to lay off 10,000 public servants. "The Government should set an example by cutting one trillion won (\$1.2

A government spokesman said the civil service layoff would affect 1 per cent of personnel in government organisations, but no timetable has been fixed. "The layoff will target mainly the technical-service sector such as railways and post offices," he said.



1.2 million members, said a two-day strike would begin on Tuesday to force the Government to dump the labour law. Power, port and railway workers were urged to go on partial strike and all others to join a full stoppage. "The federation

calls on all its members to join the largest strike ever, led especially by the public sector," said Park In-sang, federation president. Buses and trams would stop and hospitals, banks, hotels, taxis and state industries, including the

The unions have claimed 190,000 workers were on strike, but that number included people on work-to-rule. The labour ministry put the figure at about 75,000.

FROM RICHARD BEESTON
AND ROBIN LODGE
IN MOSCOW

Only two weeks after the Russian leader, describing himself as "fighting fit", promised to start 1997 with vigorous leadership, his new year's resolution was in tatters as he fought off pneumonia in the Central

General Aleksandr Lebed, the dismissed former security chief with presidential ambitions, was the first to exploit the President's latest

Doctors said yesterday that the President was being treated with antibiotics and described his condition as satisfactory. Mr. Yeltsin, 65

Mr Akchurin said Mr Yeltsin was still able to perform his duties from

leader of the pro-government Our Home is Russia faction, said it would take Mr Yeltsin considerably longer to recuperate this time. He


did not expect the President to leave hospital for at least two weeks.

About 64,000 Muscovites have been treated for influenza and other respiratory infections since the beginning of the month. Natalya Sukhinina, a spokeswoman for the Moscow Epidemiological Department, said the numbers were approximately consistent with previous years and did not amount to an epidemic. She said the flu had spread from the Far East, reaching Moscow a little later than usual this winter as a result of unseasonably warm weather until mid-December.

POLITICAL expediency rather than a reasoned medical approach may explain why Canadian physician Yelstin's doctors and colleagues doubt his lung complications.

Mr Yelstin has had a cold, and he now has, as reported, signs of congestion at the bases of his lungs. This might well be as a result of secondary infection in the lungs after his cold, a true pneumonia, but if it was it is surprising that he has no temperature. People older than Mr Yelstin, who is only 65, can have an acute pneumonia without a temperature, or one which is only slightly raised, and it would be thought that Mr Yelstin is still sufficiently young to have a normal physical response to infection.

The alternative explanation is that even the physical stress of a cold has thrown him into



MEDICAL BRIEFING

heart failure, and his heart is no longer strong enough to maintain circulation and so prevent the lungs from becoming congested. Symptoms of early congestive cardiac failure are similar to those of basal pneumonia.

Although he has made a good enough recovery from his heart surgery, statistics show that patients remain at great risk for at least a year after a coronary thrombosis.

If Mr. Yelstein does have pneumonia, this too could

place a burden on his cardio-respiratory system, which as the result of two thromboses

DR THOMAS STUTTAFFORD

DR THOMAS
STUTTAFORD

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The healing power of plants

The DISCOVERY DIET GUIDE

Homoeopathy matches cures to the lifestyle and personality of the patient, and in some cases it comes close to therapy. Grace Bradberry reports

Lynne Howard came to homoeopathy the way most people do by serendipity. In her mid-twenties, and working as a psychiatric social worker, she found herself suffering from indigestion.

After a fruitless expedition to the GP, she visited a homoeopath. For an hour, they discussed her work, her personality, her emotional family and medical history. She was given nux vomica (strychnine), and the problem went away.

Soon after, she found herself running counselling groups for people suffering from anxieties and phobias. She was fully trained for the work and also had a degree in psychology, but progress was extremely slow. Gradually she introduced homoeopathic remedies (many of which can be used for emotional complaints) and began to see results.

She embarked on a four-year training course at the College of Homoeopathy, and also completed postgraduate work to become a Member of the College of Homoeopathy.

Nine years later, at the age of 37, she has clinics in London and Essex, and also works at the Life Centre in Notting Hill.

Many of those she sees come to her with problems that have a dietary connection: indigestion, water retention, and more seriously, bulimia and anorexia.

Howard is not a nutritionist. So how can she help? "I believe that a homoeopathic remedy can actually alter the way the

body uses food," she says. "Prescribed correctly, it can help the body to assimilate nutrients more effectively."

It can also, she believes, tackle the physical cravings and emotional problems that can make it so difficult to eat the things we know we should.

Most people now know that homoeopathy is based on the theory of treating like with like. The name comes from the Greek word meaning "similar suffering", and homoeopaths believe an illness that might be caused by a large dose of a particular substance can be cured by a far smaller dose.

Most remedies are derived from plants, but minerals, metals and some poisons are also used. The extracts are repeatedly diluted in a solution of alcohol and water, then used in liquid form or soaked into tablets or granules. But for holistic DIY enthusiasts, homoeopathy can appear ineffectual and imprudent. Several remedies are often suggested for a single problem, followed by screeds on who should take what. Far more, perhaps, than other forms of complementary medicine, homoeopathy takes account of personality. One woman, suffering from premenstrual tension might be offered 16 to her partner and generally irritable. Another could be weepy and clingy. A homoeopath would give a different treatment to each.

In fact, a session with the homoeopath can be close to therapy. "If a woman came to me with period pains, I might

want to go back to the time when her periods started, and go through the whole medical and emotional history," says Howard. "Then I'd want to know about the family history — did their mothers, grandmothers have these problems? I'd also ask about any traumas. Perhaps their parents

divorced, or they were sent to boarding school. Sometimes when you construct a time-line it becomes clear that a medical problem coincided with an emotional one, and I might prescribe a remedy for grief."

So homoeopathy's individualised approach, matching the cure to the lifestyle and personality of the patient, accords with the current theory that dietary needs vary from person to person.

It is possible to treat oneself for a few trivial complaints, but for anything with deeper causes (particularly hormonal) self-prescription would be at best ineffectual. "I wouldn't recommend anyone to attempt a detoxification programme on their own," says Howard. "In some cases it can give you flu-like symptoms, so you do need supervision. If someone were spring-cleaning their system, I might give them nux vomica or sulphur to encourage the elimination process."

One of her favourite nutritional supplements is the unappetisingly named blue-green algae. "A capsule will contain a good balance of nutrients they need, so they don't have to keep focusing on food, while homoeopathic remedies can help with anxieties and depressions." Other remedies can help with the anxieties and depressions that can lead to bingeing or loss of appetite.

lary coffee and wine. Often suffers nausea or heartburn in the morning. Sulphur: an ideas person who tends to philosophise, connecting one thing with another, and surrounding herself with mess. Craves sweets and spicy food and often becomes weak from hunger around 11am. Lycopodium: lacks confidence. Compensates by being haughty or by boasting. Has wind. Tends to avoid taking on new things. Craves sweets and hot foods.



"A homoeopathic remedy can alter the way the body uses food. Prescribed correctly, it can help the body to assimilate nutrients more effectively and help with anxiety and depression"

A capsule contains a good balance of nutrients they need

Stay healthy for your baby

DURING pregnancy, the baby requires certain salts. It gets these at the expense of the mother. This homoeopathic programme will help to make good any salt deficiencies in the mother, and will assist the developing baby in meeting its salt requirements.

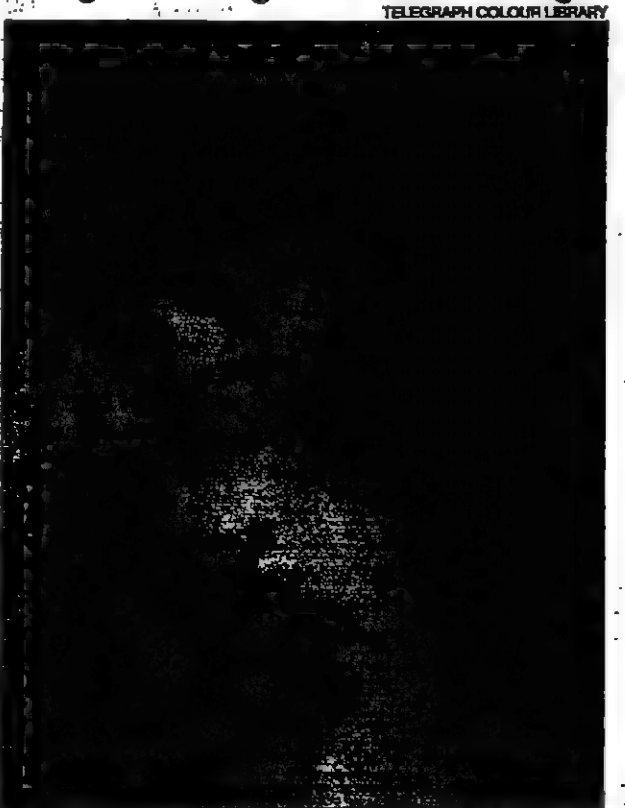
Calc Fluor (calcium fluoride) helps to ensure strong bone development and elasticity of connective tissue, helping the mother to avoid stretch marks. It should be taken in tablet form twice a day between the second and ninth month of pregnancy.

Magn Phos (magnesium phosphate) is useful for combating heartburn and ensuring good nerve development in the baby. It should be taken between the second and the seventh month and taken in tablet form twice a day.

Ferr Phos (ferrous phosphate) is useful in ensuring good blood oxygenation and should be taken from the second month of the pregnancy onwards.

Natrum mur (sodium chloride) should be taken between the third and eighth month of the pregnancy and is good for helping to control liquid balance, thus helping to prevent swollen ankles.

Silica, which should be taken between the fourth and ninth month, is generally good for ensuring strong bones and teeth and for good all-round health.



The developing fetus absorbs salts from its mother

In addition, raspberry-leaf tea or raspberry-leaf tablets can be taken daily from the fourth month. This will help to strengthen the uterus for delivery. To make raspberry-leaf tea, add three teaspoons of raspberry leaves to one pint of boiling water. This can be cooled and kept in the fridge. The raspberry-leaf dosage is one cup or three tablets from 20 weeks, two cups or six tablets from 28 weeks and three cups or nine tablets from 36 weeks.

How to cope with PMT

There is a desire for fresh air, an aversion to heat, fats and rich foods, but no thirst. Natrum mur. She has a tendency to feel rejected, yet at the same time wants to be alone. She also dwells on bad things that have happened, clinging to past relationships. Craves salt, feels

warm and experiences a strong thirst for cold drinks. Howard also offers remedies for indigestion: Nux vomica: the classic high-flyer — independent, desperate to succeed, unable to relax. Tends to feel cold, craves stimulants, particu-



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Alice Oswald started writing poetry when she was eight years old. She still has her first tiny collection

A garden path to poetry's prize list

Alice Oswald and her husband Peter are like the Romantics. Both aged 30, handsome, clever and impecunious, they subsist uncompromisingly on writing. Alice writes poems and Peter writes verse plays, two formidably thorny and elusive paths to fame and fortune.

Thanks to the largesse of the Dartington Trust, they live for the moment, with their new baby Joe, in a grey council-style house on the Dartington estate in Devon, "like those hermits," Alice says, "who lived in posh people's grottoes in the 18th century".

On Sunday evening Alice will be in London, reading her poems at the Almeida Theatre, along with others shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize for the best new collection of poetry this year — the £5,000 winner will be announced on Monday.

Since the shortlist also includes Seamus Heaney, John Fuller, Adrian Mitchell and Christopher Reid, she is gratifyingly (if unluckily) pitted against the best and most established names. Still, *Radio 4's Kaleidoscope* this week picked her out as an unusually distinctive and promising new voice with "the beginnings of real authority — something like the early Ted Hughes".

Mr Hughes is indeed her hero. He lives somewhere very close by but she would never be so importunate as to forage, even circuitously for an introduction.

She is a self-contained young woman: original, spare and strange, incapable of polite platitudes, not terribly fond of talking at all, and utterly committed to practicing what Anne Sexton called The Black Art ("A woman who writes feels too much: Those trances and portents..."). To pursue the poet's life, she has worked for eight years as a gardener.

A first car across her in 1994 at the fishing village of Clovelly, Devon, with its steep picturesque cobbled slope down to the sea. With donkeys for hire outside the garden gate, she was occupying a sparsely furnished cottage with one hideous uncomfortable armchair, a bare lightbulb, no heating, no telephone and two tiny rooms that kept the sun out and let the cold in.

By day, she toiled, for £150 week, in the walled garden of manor house, Clovelly Court. She would get up at 4am to write

wrapped in blankets, her hands always icy. But she said she did not believe in creature comforts: "You have more energy if you are physically fighting something."

She had just won an Eric Gregory award, £6,000 presented by V.S. Naipaul, and felt tremendously grateful to Eric Gregory (a printer who left money to encourage young poets) for making such a difference to her life. But she was equally gratified to be growing the Charentais melon. She had written a poem about a melon grower, and

then tried it herself. Most of her poems — not the ones published in book form — had horticultural themes. Her mother, the gardening consultant and writer Mary Keen, says she can identify the gardens Alice was working at when she wrote a particular poem — *The Glass House* while at Lord Rothschild's house, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire; *Pruning in Frost* Cliveden.

This year she no longer has to weed or dig, thanks to a £10,000 cheque from the Arts Council. When Lord Gowrie presented it to her, she carried her baby, named Joseph Michaelmas, as he was born on Michaelmas Day, in her arm.


In fact, things are looking altogether promising for the Oswald-Peter's play *Fair Ladies As A Game of Poem Cards*, based on an 18th-century Japanese puppet play, running at the National Theatre; another is in rehearsal at the Gaiety. A letter commissioning him to write a new verse play for the Gaiety is also in the air.

Theatre lies on the kitchen table. They have no car or television, but they do now have heating, pay a telephone and fax, so there is communication with the modern world beyond the frozen glass outside. "It's like a university campus here," Alice says. "Even there are no scientists in glass suits only creative people. And it's wonderful to have a baby, to bring a touch of real life to balance all this airiness." The sounds of Josephine's lap, making the usual noises, punctuate our conversation.

Alice had a charmed childhood with two sisters and a brother — people called them the Brontës — in a series of country houses where her mother would create enchanted gardens.

They were the sort of family who gathered round the piano with the *Faber Popular Reciter*. "We were very close; a gang of children in an aesthetically amazing, protected environment." Alice was the silent deep one; "infuriating sometimes," her mother says, adding that geniuses do often have a tough

**THE
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When Alice was eight, after sleepless nights feeling terrified in the dark in a bedroom thought to be haunted, she wrote her first poem. She still has the tiny collection.

tion with the pencilled title "Poem by Alice Keen aged 8yrs". They are about storms at night, fears of lightning, dustbin men, being bored, and something called the snapper-tooth beast that eats you alive. She used to hide her notebook under the hydrangeas, in case anyone should find it.

When Alice left Oxford, having read Classics at New College — she met her husband in their first term — she took to gardening as a reaction against all that abstract brain work and as a means of getting a place to live. She learned then that "gardens are not made by crying, 'Oh! how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade."

At Wisley, the Royal Horticultural Society headquarters, she learned the skills of propagation and how to prune an apple tree by imagining a goblin shape. "I loved the physical, energetic side of gardening," she changed my whole way of looking at the world. When I got to Wisley just after the gales of January 1991, I was saving up a birch tree and noticed how catskins are male and female and imagined the little birds wedding on the end of the twig. I realised that order is not something

you impose, but emanates from the subject. I still wrote love sonnets, but I realised there was no point in writing about the natural world in a formal and orderly way."

She served an apprenticeship with the National Trust at Cliveden. Clipping box hedges all day meant "floating beyond the threshold of boredom. I like the detail of gardens. I see them not as pretty places, but as an extraordinary collection of life-forms. I was a gardener to be able to write, rather than to be able to garden."

Her first book of poems — shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize too — came out last March: entitled *The Thing in the Gap-stone*. Still, in reference to the gap in dry-stone walls, to make a foothold for climbing, “like a gap-toothed smile.” It’s the sensation of being between two places, a magical moment: that kind of space is what I try to create in my poems.” I recommend *Three Wise Men of Gotham* which *Set Out to Catch the Moon in a Net*, a long dramatic poem written while working by the Cornish seas.

Last year found her at the Chelsea Physic Garden, until pregnancy intervened: "We thought of going to live in the trees at Newbury, but suddenly realised that it might not be a good idea to be pregnant up a tree." Instead she wrote, appropriately, a poem about Sisyphus.

The baby was born after long labour soothed by birth pool. "We had decided to cope entirely on our own, with no help from mothers sisters. We thought it would come naturally. But it didn't: we couldn't understand why I screamed, and I soon cracked.

"I had to go back into hospital; my blood pressure was so high and Peter had to be at the National for rehearsals; so I went to stay with my mother and learn about baby care, on long walks through frozen woods, with the baby in a sling of which my mother disapproves."

She also had her Rapunzel moment of hair cut off: "It's the kind of thing women do when they have a baby, wanted to look uncompromising and furious."

"Sleepless" poets' painful vigil keep," as Pope said; and her new collection will perhaps reflect how poet-mother adapts to writing brief interstices of time.

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Roger Boyes profiles Ernst Jünger; plus an extract from Thomas Nevin's new biography of the German warrior poet

Witness to the moment of death



As old as the century, Ernst Jünger is one of its most remarkable writers

High on a shelf in Ernst Jünger's orderly house sits the steel helmet that saved him from a warrior's death and allowed him to live to the age of 101. Helmut Kohl admired it and so too did François Mitterrand when they visited the still-sharp writer who is regarded as one of the most controversial literary figures of the century.

Why should two modern statesmen pay homage to a man depicted as the spiritual founder of fascism, a militarist who coolly analyses the shades of blood squirting from a dying soldier?

Baudelaire believed that only three men were worthy of respect: the priest, the warrior and the poet. To know, to kill, to create. Jünger embodies all three qualities — and one might even say that only through killing did he come to his knowledge, his moral certainties and his laconic poetic style. The battlefield bound Jünger to Mitterrand and Kohl, as did a vision of Europe crafted as an act of intellectual resistance during the Second World War.

Mitterrand, in his final speech abroad, recalled his admiration for the human qualities of German soldiers. Kohl, too young to fight, remembers war as a time of separation from his parents, the death of his brother, hunger and a battered home town. Kohl's heroes are the post-war rebuilders, not Jünger's men in uniform. But he can find common ground with a national conservative, philosopher and patriot who kept his distance from the Nazis (not far enough, say the critics).

Jünger's real contemporary fascination for these two statesmen was a long essay, entitled *The Peace*, written in 1941 and updated with the knowledge of German atrocities in the spring of 1944. Its



Jackboots in Paris: Ernst Jünger hoped that the French would grow to love their German occupiers

subtle was "A Word to the Youth of Europe" and it was a remarkable attempt to see beyond a lost war into a new, remodelled Europe.

Hitler had failed to understand that Europe could not be unified by force. Jünger had hoped that the French could come to love their German occupiers. That hope had been dashed. Now, he argued, it was time for economic, technological and political unity in Europe. The essay was shown

to Erwin Rommel and other senior officers close to the July 1944 plot against Hitler. They liked the text and were at ease with the idea that a unified Europe could be governed only by authoritarian rule.

That was the closest Jünger came to an act of resistance to Hitler. Many of those who read the essay in 1944 died soon afterwards at the end of a Nazi executioner's rope. Jünger, perhaps because of his strange, almost personal relationship with Hitler, was not put on trial. His low level of resistance set against his physical courage and his clear-sighted perception of Nazi weakness has confused critics, especially those on the left.

The biographical transitions seem too jagged — from a First World War lieutenant, 13 times wounded, to a conservative polemicist who refused to enter parliament on a Nazi ticket or to join the Nazi-dominated Poetry Academy; from polemicist to cultured Wehrmacht officer in occupied France and, after the war, the author of an extraordinary

range of work including a book about drugs and even a detective novel. Yet the passages are not unusual for a German intellectual; the oddity is in his survival.

Jünger was a tearaway teenager. At 16 he ran away to France, signed up for the Foreign Legion and was posted to North Africa. His father bought him out, but only after his son had learnt to shoot and march. That put him in good stead for the 1914-18 War. He was sent to the front and was immediately seized with excitement. "The overpowering wish to kill winged my steps. Fury squeezed bitter tears from me."

This intoxication, this animal urge, sat alongside a gentlemanly code of conduct. All of his war books, but in particular *Storm of Steel*, pay respect to the English. A wounded English soldier flashes a family photograph in a last desperate act of defence and Jünger decides not to kill. The descriptions of the war are powerful. At the Somme, the dead "dissolved into a greenish fishmeal that glowed at night through their tan uniforms. When stepped upon, they left phosphorous

Jünger describes how he was ordered to oversee the execution of a deserter by firing squad in Paris

Jünger's works, especially the greatest of them, the chronicles of two wars, will endure. His place in German literary history is secure. That he is, in the terms of current fashion, the politically incorrect writer *par excellence* will not eventually count for much. His writing does us the inestimable service of all truly worthy literature: it breaches our puny, comfortable assumptions about the world, forcing us to see differently and confronting what we want reality to be. Jünger perceives chaos and order in equipoise, but neither of his sightings reassures us: order offers us no personal redemption and chaos is the unsettling constant in life itself. It is the void we fill with war no less than with peace.

Having served as a highly decorated storm troop officer in the First World War, at the onset of the Second World War, aged 44, he found himself in uniform again.

War meant an end to writing at leisure, but he could go on with his diary. "There will be no lack of spectacle," he wrote.

Jünger's Paris notebooks date from the spring of 1941. He served on the staff of the military governor of the city, General Karl Heinrich Stulpnagel, and lived at the Hotel Raphael on the Avenue des

eyes are wide open, motionless, absorbing, large, as though the body were hanging on to them. His whole mouth moves as though he were spelling. His glance falls on me and carries a second over my face with a penetrating, searching tension. I note that the excitement confers upon him the look of something intricate, blooming, indeed childlike.

The minute's reading seems interminable. The blindfolded man kisses a small silver cross, and a doctor places a piece of red cardboard over the heart.

"I would like to glance past but force myself to look straight on and seize the moment when, with the salvo fire, dark little holes appear in the cardboard as though dewdrops had fallen on it. The man shot is still standing by the tree; his features express a dreadful surprise. I see his mouth opening and closing as though it wanted to shape vowels and still, with great effort, to express something. The situation is perplexing, and again the time stretches out. It even seems the man has become dangerous. Finally his knees give in."

The physician explains that the dying man's gestures were only reflexes. Jünger is not persuaded. "He hasn't seen what became evident to me in a ghastly way."

Taken superficially, this passage ratifies a central objection to Jünger, that he achieves aesthetic concentration at the cost of moral sensitivity, as though he had followed to the letter John Ruskin's advice for "the great painter": "Always cool yourself as you either look on, or take any necessary part in the play. Cool, and strong-willed — moveless in observant soul. Does a man die at your feet — your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips..."

'He has the look of something blooming, indeed childlike'

On May 29, 1941, only a few weeks after his appointment to the staff, Jünger noted: "Added to the flood of unpleasant things weighing on me, it happens I have been ordered to oversee the execution of a soldier condemned to death for desertion. At first I intended to report sick but that seemed a cheap way out. I also thought perhaps it's better that you are there rather than someone else." A "higher curiosity" seized him. In the previous war he had not observed a deserter shot, nor anyone prepared for the precise moment of death. Here was a situation "daily threatening each of us, shadowing our lives".

The condemned man had deserted the army shortly after the surrender, and hid out with a French mistress in Paris. When he abused her, she turned him in.

Jünger arrives at the execution site (probably la Vallée-aux-Loisirs) towards dawn. On catching sight of the prisoner, he is overcome with a feeling of oppression, as though breathing itself had become difficult. The man's face has features attractive to women. While his death sentence is read, he seems to attend with keen awareness, "yet I have the impression the text is passing him by. His

obsession to Jünger, that he achieves aesthetic concentration at the cost of moral sensitivity, as though he had followed to the letter John Ruskin's advice for "the great painter": "Always cool yourself as you either look on, or take any necessary part in the play. Cool, and strong-willed — moveless in observant soul. Does a man die at your feet — your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips..."

The rationale, that he might observe the very moment of death's stroke, seems a morbid rather than a "higher" curiosity. It is his narrative that is "higher": higher than any film record could be, because he is humanly susceptible, yet it escapes the merely clinical estimate which the physician provides at the close. This narrative aesthetically fits the charge that Jünger's aestheticism is morally insensitive.

To say that he shows no compassion does not prove he does not feel it, or is incapable of it. More important, his narrative gives the reader grounds for pity and terror.

Extracted from Ernst Jünger and Germany by Thomas Nevin (Constable £20)

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The Nazis courted Jünger, but could not engage him

Ernst Jünger is an entomologist. His house is a small museum of some 40,000 preserved beetles, each one precisely classified. The same skills are brought to bear in describing the misery of both wars. But in his First World War memoirs there was an intensity, missing from his later work. It was this and his commitment to the intrinsic value of combat that made him an intellectual celebrity of the inter-war years.

The Nazis courted Jünger but they could not engage him. The mediocrity of Goebbels and Goering offended Jünger's aristocratic sensibilities. In *The Worker*, published in 1932, he set out a totalitarian future in which social control was exercised by those who could manipulate the levers of technological change. His concern in this and other works was concentrated more on Stalin and Bolshevism than on Hitler and Nazism. Critics say this distancing from National Socialism was a moral desertion, that Jünger should have sponsored out on the worsening anti-Semitic climate. The beneficiary of a private income, Jünger was sheltered from some of the problems experienced by his colleagues — the bullying and the persecution of Jews.

Jünger fans point, in his defence, to the 1939 work *On The Marble Cliffs*, which paints a grim metaphor of totalitarian rule, adding a bit of Stalin and a bit of Goering (although not Hitler) to his portrayal of a sinister ruler known as the Forest Ranger. The opening line, with echoes of Dante, gives a hint of the man behind the cold mask of a spectator at the feast of tyrants. "All of you know the wild grief that seizes us in the remembrance of happy times."

As Jünger approaches his 102nd birthday, how much "wild grief" still seethes below the surface? He has lost a wife, a son in battle and a son to suicide; to live so long is to outlive not only contemporaries but also their grandchildren. Prophecies come true or fall hopelessly by the wayside. All that is left is a kind of internal ordering to fend off the chaos. As Nabokov sought solace in butterflies, so Jünger now prefers the company of beetles to human beings.

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Philip Howard



■ We shouldn't wear an eye-patch when looking at our piratical ancestors

Let us have pirates about us that are black. Their hearts should be black, and their hands bloody. So Disneyland's decision to replace the old-fashioned pirates in its theme park with more politically correct buccaneers is dumb. It is also deplorable. When Disney's pirate-ride reopens, instead of chasing women, its pretend pirates will bunch them with flowers and woo them with fruit. The foolish fringe of the feminist lobby is gratified. But as scholars have pointed out, because of the scarcity of females, pirates (like sailors) were mostly homosexual and did not chase women except to rob, kill and possibly eat them. And as the common enemies of mankind, pirates were outlaws operating outside the margins of society. They were negative advertisements for civilisation.

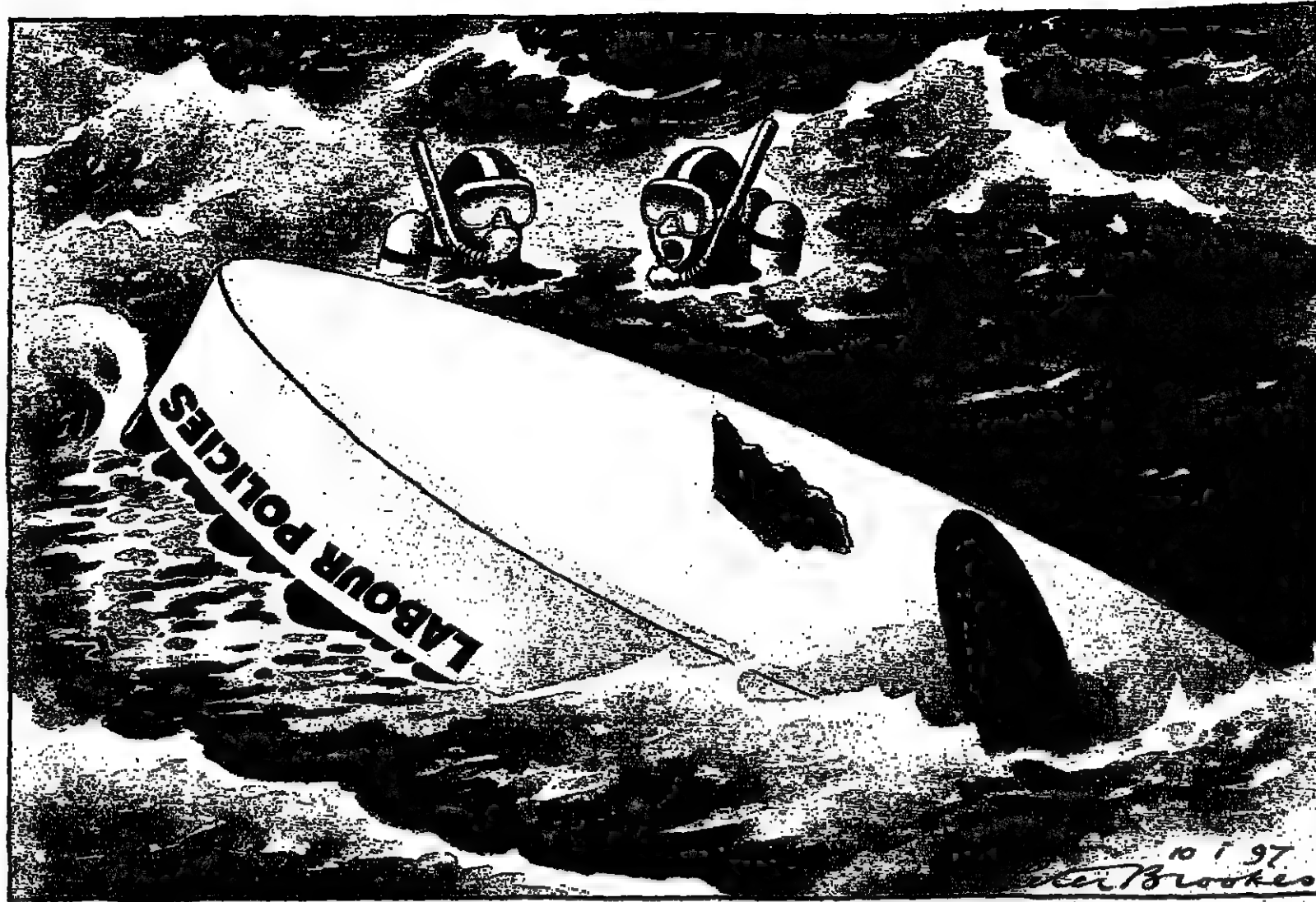
As an old, civilised and maritime society, Britain played its part in putting down the pirates of the Levant and the Barbary Coast. But the British have always been ambivalent about the sea savages. For under our mongrel skin we are a piratical race. After the Romans, the three tidal waves of invaders who made Britain were pirates: Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans (just Vikings come to roost). Drake and the seamen who beat the Armada and ruled the waves for the merchant venturers were pirates, though Elizabethan PR called them privateers.

And once the north-western quarter of the world was freed from pirates, we romanticised the brutes. *Robinson Crusoe* introduced the genre of desert island romance. Byron glamorised corsairs and such dangerous loners. *Treasure Island* made pirates swash their buckles. But blind Pew tap-tapping down the street to deliver the black spot is still terrifying. That book is also politically insensitive to the monogamous and monocular. But then the first novel was equally deformist about Polyphemus, the original man-eating, one-eyed pirate. It is a grief that *Treasure Island* is not available for shrieks and bangs in the London theatre this season.

Hollywood carried on this charming of the pirate through Douglas Fairbanks, Errol Flynn, Victor Mature, and (more sub-textually) Robert Newton, with eye-rolling villainy and his shin strapped up behind his thigh. *Peter Pan* at Ayr this winter has been emasculated by the need to censor Wendy's advice to her Lost Boys to die like "English" gentlemen, and all Captain Hook's references to his Etonian training for piracy. But the production is made more realistic by the revelation that the actor playing Smee (the cuddly pirate) is in love with Peter Pan (a male pop star).

The British are intensely law-abiding and respectable. But our piratical roots show in our long-distance yachtsmen, seeking the freedom of the seas, and their gallant rescuers, when the yachtsmen inevitably sink. The little boats that sailed to Dunkirk represented our privateering heritage. But although we secretly admire the wild freedom of the pirate, we know that he is an enemy of civil society. We may make fun of him to sing "It is, it is a glorious thing / To be a Pirate King"; but the civilised side of our split nature recognises that the dirtiest land thief is a Christian gentleman compared to a real pirate. The pirate is as cruel as a samurai and as deep as Davy Jones's Locker. Jolly-Rogering and yoho-hoing do well enough to give small boys a pleasurable frisson, but the modern descendants of the pirate are hijackers and terrorists. Even Disney, which turns everything cute, even Shere Khan drawn by George Sanders, should not turn pirates into gentlemen. The only civilised treatment for pirates is to stamp on their fingers as they try to board and so set them free to "walk home". Pirates never made anyone walk the plank. It would have been too expensive and needed greater organisation than the drunken brutes had. They chucked their victims overboard.

J. Caesar knew how to treat pirates. As a young politician, he was captured by pirates and held for ransom for 40 days while the deal was negotiated. He joked with his *Jocosus Rogers* that he would come back and crucify them. They laughed a lot. But when he was freed, the first thing Caesar did was raise a fleet and crucify his pirates to a man. For once the taxi-driver is right. That is the only language the gods understand.



"THERE'S THIS FAINT KNOCKING SOUND, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THERE'S ANYTHING THERE..."

New plays are the thing

Why do I go to the theatre so seldom these days? Could it be that too few playwrights are playwrighting?

First question. Why is the London theatre dying on its one remaining leg? Answer: you are an idiot, because the London theatre has never in its life before been so healthy, crammed and enjoyed. Oh, yes? (See Lloyd Webber musicals.)

Next question: When did the play called *The Woman in Black* open at the Fortune and how long has it been there?

Next question: Why do I now go to the London theatre roughly once in six months, and why are *Art* and *Talking Heads* the only new plays for several years I shall remember, and would remember even if the three actors in the first play and the two in the second play were not so superb?

Next question: Who is Georgina Brown, who knows so much about the London theatre and makes me shiver when she writes in the *Mail on Sunday*?

Can the West End sustain another musical? Or, by inventing the first blockbuster musical, did Andrew Lloyd Webber unwittingly create a monster whose offspring have ravaged what was once the proud home of the British play by eating up all the best theatres, the talent, the money and its ever-dwindling audience?

Take those few words about the theatre, "its ever-dwindling audience". That dwindling audience is no mirage, and the fact that Mr Brown goes far and wide to praise the Royal Court and Pinter's most recent (and most dreadful) play is another sign. There are many more signs — I pick one casually from the catalogue, and Duncan Weldon, one of the greatest producers we have had, pops out and says laconically, after he has put on *Plunder*, an old farce, he will have no change from £300,000. But Weldon groans not because of the money that is disappearing from his pockets, but for the plays that never even got into his pockets in the first place.

And that is where I come in. I have loved the theatre from boyhood, and the theatre has been second only to music itself. I have been a theatre critic five times, and survived. I have seen thousands — not hundreds — of plays, and left on tiptoe from many hundreds, well before the curtain fell. (Disgraceful, you say? You didn't see some of the worst ones.) Ignoring the classics, which are in a separate category, I ask again why do I now go to the theatre some twice a year, not 20 times as it once was and now still should be?

A few suggestions. The tickets are now too expensive — go in the gods. There's nowhere to park — go by bus. The streets in the centre are dangerous — they aren't. You can't get a drink in the interval — shove harder. Any more excuses? There aren't any more excuses. The terrible answer — and when I say terrible I am not exaggerating — the terrible answer is that there are no new great playwrights and hardly any of any weight, some old ones are no longer writing, and when did we last see a new play from Shaffer? (You tell me that there is a Shaffer? Yes, he came up with a miniature after many years.)

Some say that the overbearing weight of the gigantic musicals is driving all other plays out of the business, but that cannot be the problem, even though the monsters — *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Sunset Boulevard* and all (not to speak of *Jesus Christ Superstar* which started the whole business) — are all crowded nightly.

Ho, all crowded nightly are they? Aha and Ho, there's the trick — the mighty monsters have driven the ordinary playwrights off the stage. Wrong, surely wrong: not only are there plenty of stages to put plays on, but — and to our shame — at any time there are anything up to half a dozen theatres that are dark: the doors are shut and there are no plays to open with. Georgina Brown, who set me off on this hunt, suggests that the very presence of the mighty pillars frightens ordinary playwrights away. Is it true that, say, *Cats* (which has been running for 15 years, and will never close) drives out the non-musicals? Surely our playgoers are not so timid? (I have heard that when it was announced that Covent Garden was to close for two years for its greatly needed repairs, the Opera House asked

Drury Lane if it would give up *Miss Saigon* for that time. The answer was a very rude sound.)

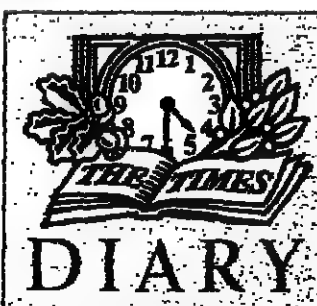
Another grim clue. When I first heard of *Art*, I was suspicious (I had been on my guard for many years after all, even though the threesome of players — Finney, Courtenay and Stott — make a formidable trio. But such splendid actors would not truck about: nor do they. But by the time I had decided to go, ignoring the suspect name of the play, half the town had been there in Manchester, to say nothing of Scotland. Nevertheless, the heart of theatre in this country is in the heart of London, and that is only one reason I tremble when I look down the list of West End plays.

I am told that several plays are in the pipeline, and all I have to do is wait. That was what they used to say in the glory days when real new plays tumbled out of any wastebasket. But if the new world is about to put its nose through the curtain, the curtain has been recently. My growing is no shadow; look through the theatre page of any paper that takes the theatre seriously: countless Lloyd Webber pieces, a few dozen oldies — say, *The Cherry Orchard*, *An Inspector Calls*, *An Ideal Husband*, *A Doll's House*, and — so far eight years — *The Woman in Black*. Roll up, roll up, customers, and see *The Woman in Black* for the ninth time.

But I am not sneering; if anything, I am weeping. You may say that an old play is better than no play, and I am on the verge of saying that it isn't. But if fewer and fewer plays turn up (and I mean plays for which it is worth getting out of an armchair), it will be not a nuisance but a great hole in the fabric of our land. We can live without the theatre, of course, but I fear that if it withers and dies, nothing will bring it back to life.

This is the last in the present series of columns. Bernard Levin will continue to write elsewhere in *The Times*.

Bernard Levin



Feel envious of a former Lloyd's man spending £25 million on his house beats me.

● Flying in from New York for the British premiere of her latest film, *Some Mother's Son*, Helen Mirren found herself delayed for two hours by Virgin. She was held up for an hour in the air and another waiting for her baggage. So much, then, for letting the airline use all that soft-focus filming of her legs in their advertisements.

Over here

WESTMINSTER is running thicker than a Louisiana bayou with American members of Congress at the moment, the result of some frenetic work by Sir John Kerr, the British Ambassador in Washington. Just before the November congressional elections in

America, when candidates are at their most vulnerable to a friendly invitation, Kerr picked the likely winners and suggested they come over to Britain.

Since November, 24 senators and congressmen have visited, and another 25 are expected in the next month, to discuss subjects from agriculture to Nato and, naturally enough, transatlantic relations. There is, however, a price to pay for proving that the special relationship still exists. "It would be rude," says the Foreign Office, "if, having invited them, we did not pick up the cost of their visits."

● Monday sees the publication of *Roll the Dice*, the memoirs of Darius Guppy, convicted fraudster and friend of Earl Spencer. The title of the work is a sorry compromise, after the publishers dropped the early working title, which referred directly to the chaotic jewel insurance scam for which Guppy did his porridge. My Little Gem: Polished but Flawed.

Gone ape

AFTER several torrid months in the press, here is some sunshine news about Hugh Grant. He has written a detailed 1,000-word foreword to *Mission Possible*, a book by Ian Guard, 19, a Cambridge undergraduate, about the plight of

A sect fit for the starry-eyed

Michael Gove on Helmut Kohl and the Scientologists

Holocaust denial is a perversion of history. Holocaust hyperbole is becoming almost as disreputable. Holocaust hyperbole is the casual exaggeration of a current injustice which ranks it with the genocide of Nazi Germany. The latest and nastiest example is an "Open letter to Helmut Kohl" from a B-list of Hollywood names, comparing the treatment of Scientologists in Kohl's republic to the persecution of Jews in Hitler's Reich.

The Nazis' systematic deployment of all the tools of state terror, and the complicity of a people in the attempted extermination of an entire race — the culmination of centuries of prejudice and pogrom — was a crime of unequalled barbarity. It is an insult to the suffering of its victims and the dignity of its survivors to use the memory of the Holocaust to manufacture outrage. To equate it with any abuse of power in Germany today is grotesquely inappropriate. And to compare the organised murder of the Jewish race to the difficulties faced by a "Church" of hustlers stretches the limits of tolerance.

One might have thought that even in Hollywood, the home of mangled history, muddled liberalism and gullibility, it would be hard to find 34 holy fools prepared to put their name on a billboard advertising their own insensitivity. Yet actors as distinguished as Dustin Hoffman and producers as powerful as Aaron Spelling have allowed their reputations to be damaged by endorsing the unequal equation of anti-Semitism and opposition to Scientology.

It would be bad enough if those who wrote to Herr Kohl had made their misadroit intervention out of misguided sentiment; but the ruffe of dollars and the whiff of the agent's cigar can be discerned in the background. As Giles Whittell reports on our foreign pages, the links between Scientology and the signatories are not all ties of the purest principle.

Hollywood has long been home not only to the mixed motive and the hired hand, but also to a residual anti-German feeling. Many of its first names have known something of the real horrors of Middle-European intolerance. Modern Germany may have its faults, as the shameful treatment of asylum-seekers in the eastern *Länder* shows, but it also has its virtues. One of those is its robust recognition of the ways a determined sect can exploit the tolerance of liberal society.

Our Home Office has recognised Scientology as a "bona fide religion" and opened the way to its application for charitable status. The Germans have seen it for what it is — in the words of a 1995 court ruling, in Cassel, Hesse — a "business organisation". But Scientology is no Stairway — it is a vast exercise in self-promotion and networking which robs the vulnerable of their dignity and more, peddling in return a pseudo-science that would look ludicrous in a *Star Trek* script. If Scientology is a Church, then Elmer Gantry is its patron saint. Its founder, the hack-turned-quack L. Ron Hubbard, established the sect as a lucrative proof that there are, indeed, several born every minute.

Scientologists believe that Ron, somehow visited Venus, although how he survived the concentrated sulphuric acid rain or the surface temperature of 460 degrees Celsius remains, like so much about the cult, obscure. Hubbard believed that human beings are receptacles for immaterial forces called, with all the imagination of a man who started his career in comic books, *Thetans*. The *Thetans*, according to a Scientology textbook, were brought to Earth by an evil lord called Xenu. Scientologists do not respond warmly when asked about his relation to the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

It is easy, and healthy, to laugh, but ridicule is not enough. Scientology is, if anything, more pernicious than proposition. Like many cults it offers structure, coherence and companionship for bruised souls. The quasi-induction process of "auditing" mimics some of the soothing effects of psychotherapy and has proved much more addictive. Sessions are expensive and recruits who wish to persevere with auditing until they reach a state in which they are "clear" have to earn their treatment by pavement proselytising. They become pyramid-salesmen for salvation.

Scientology has also made money from other business involvements, not least property speculation in East Germany. Money that is handed over by converts is invested in concrete. The organisation is estimated to have made around £60 million profit in Germany alone last year from "education" material.

The young in ordered societies such as Germany and Japan are particularly susceptible to the call of closed cultures, as the terrifying success of Japan's Aum sect showed. Germany, where the Constitution is a model of rationalist legalism, erected "to guarantee" civil liberties in the shadow of the Holocaust, is particularly vulnerable. Liberal democracy's weakness is its willingness to extend to its enemies rights which they will not scruple to abuse.

In refusing to take Scientology at its own estimation and recognising the *salvific* saviours as hustlers, Germany has done democracy a service. Herr Kohl should also be saluted for yesterday dismissing the Hollywood letter as "rubbish". His common sense suggests that 60 years after Weimar failed to stand up to intimidation, Germany is at last beginning to feel at ease with itself.

P.H.S

Whitewash

LAWYERS working on behalf of the cricketers Ian Botham and Allan Lamb are delighted by news of the paternity suit filed in California by Sita White, daughter of the late Lord White of Hull, against Imran Khan. Any smear on Imran's reputation might be useful when they resume their battle next year.

Botham and Lamb felt hard done by in the way they lost their libel action against Imran last year, and their lawyers feel that Imran's team played dirty. Their appeal has just been postponed from this October to April 1998, by which time, should Imran's ambitions go to plan, he will be safely ensconced as Pakistan's Prime Minister. But even if Imran does win office, his political position, like President Clinton's, will probably be sandbagged by unsavoury litigation.

"We made a conscious decision not to bring in a smear campaign against Imran Khan about Sita White's alleged love-child in the High Court," says Rhydy Robertson, of Sweetstone Walsh (Botham and Lamb's solicitor). However, George Carman, QC, brought up all of the old sex and drugs stories about Botham, on behalf of Imran.

"Whether I was right or wrong in giving that advice, in light of the muck that was thrown at us by Imran's legal team, will be debated until I go to the grave," says Robertson. "But we may well bring this White business up in the retrial."

● Cold weather is no problem for the Prime Minister's exotic collection of fish, kept in a pond at his home in Huntingdon. The two



Sita White: allegations

policemen who guard the house receive a full list of instructions whenever the PM goes away, and have grown fond of the assorted *Koi carp* and *goldfish*, which are rubbed with sunscreen in hot weather. The policemen, who occupy a hut on the property, make sure the pond does not freeze solid by pouring saucers of warm (not boiling) water onto any icy patches.

More More

ENGLISH HERITAGE and its chairman, Sir Jocelyn Stevens, have swung in behind Christopher Moran, the former underwriter expelled from Lloyd's, and his plans to renovate Crosby Hall in Chelsea, the 15th-century home of Sir Thomas More.

Moran has been trying to overhaul the place at a personal cost of £25 million, against the objections of certain local residents and the council.

The outcome of Moran's appeal against Kensington and Chelsea council's decision will be heard by the Secretary of State for the Environment later this month. "It is a project to which I have dedicated the rest of my life," Moran said. "Some residents say their view of the river will be spoilt, but there is an undercurrent of envy about this. 'Why on earth anyone should



Grant, monkeying around

the African mountain gorilla. Proceeds go to the International Gorilla Conservation Programme and the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.

Grant is a keen monkey man. His girlfriend, Liz Hurley, even calls him "Monkey", because she thinks he looks like one, and their joint film production company is called *Simian Films*.

"We must not become complacent," writes Grant. "The gorilla represents not just a species but a whole ecosystem which also needs conserving."



ELEPHANT AMONG TIGERS

The right moment to encourage India's drive for modernisation

As John Major was happy to acknowledge yesterday, the assembly of 10,000 Indian businessmen he addressed in Calcutta was probably the largest of his political career. An even larger audience was also in his sights, the million-strong Indian community in Britain whose industry, enterprise and strong sense of ethical values he praised, and whose votes British politicians are anxious to court. But it would be wrong to see Mr Major's sub-continental journey entirely through the prism of electoral politics. His enthusiasm for British ties with India is real, and is not limited to cricket.

The Prime Minister was quick to see that India's dismantling of the post-independence "licence raj" promised not only industrial freedom and economic opportunity but an easing of the country's prolonged and prickly defensiveness towards its former colonial ruler. The new Indo-British partnership agreement which he signed in 1993 has helped to double two-way trade. British investment in India has increased by 50 per cent in the same period, with the forming of more than 600 new joint ventures. Investment worth another £3 billion lies ahead.

Given that an economy of 950 million people is still only about the size of Belgium's and that the total annual foreign investment it attracts today is only about £2.4 billion, this is business on a significant scale. But Mr Major has been equally active in pressing for India's inclusion, as an increasingly important regional power, in the regular dialogue between the European Union and the "tiger" economies of Asia.

India is partly to blame for this omission: for years it seemed naturally to exclude itself through the closed nature of its economy and its preferred identity as cheerleader for Third World confrontationists and close Asian partner of the Soviet Union. But now that the elephant is lumbering up to face the world in which the tigers have long moved, Mr Major is right to press India's case for inclusion and Britain's European partners should be prepared to concede it.

Dialogue is particularly important to

India because of its long and unrewarding adherence to a semi-autarkic, highly bureaucratic and state-dominated economy. Indians sometimes joke that the extensive macroeconomic reforms undertaken since 1991 have been pragmatic rather than ideological — because the Indian Government itself does not believe in them. The first steps were certainly taken by crisis. But Deve Gowda was a pioneering crusader for liberalisation in Karnataka before becoming Prime Minister last year; he, at least, seems to believe in what he is doing.

Although the old prejudices against private enterprise are fading and the country is much less crippled by the industrial licence system than it was, the culture of petty regulation survives. Some industrial sectors are adapting fast to a more open economy, but there is an undimmed determination among others, particularly in consumer goods, to keep the thick blanket of protection that has coddled them against foreign competition. Against strong internal pressures of this kind, India's reformers need to be able to set the examples of success in open-market economies, and the discipline of international rules such as the World Trade Organisation supplies.

In the 50 years since independence, India has made so little of its potential that it is currently home to around 40 per cent of the world's desperately poor. It has an enormous amount to do if it is to realise the vision Mr Major offered yesterday of a country which within the next 50 years will be a nation not of "huddled masses" but of prospering producers and consumers, "a political force for the good" in Asia and a leading player in the Commonwealth and global institutions. Mr Major had the sense to talk in terms of common challenges and to acknowledge Britain's own experience of "the pain and difficulty of economic change". But this was not a message that a British Prime Minister could have risked delivering, however politely, only a few years ago. It is because India is such a different country today that his journey is timely, his time well spent.

TOON AND CITY

Keegan would never have felt comfortable in a public company

Rarely have the loyalties of one city been so bound up with the fortunes of its football club. Manchester and Liverpool play host to rival teams: London has a plethora. But in Newcastle, nearly everyone supports Newcastle United. The recent revival of the club's fortunes has paralleled the revival of the city. No wonder, then, that the response to the resignation of Kevin Keegan as manager of the club has been one of almost universal despair.

But once they have got over the initial shock, supporters of the Magpies may come to realise that Mr Keegan left at the right time. Newcastle United is due to be floated on the stock market very soon, and the club's bankers advised Mr Keegan that he had to make up his mind whether he intended to stay. Having been nearly as liberal with his resignation threats as with the chequebook of his backer, Sir John Hall, Mr Keegan had to undertake to remain for some time after the flotation. This, it seemed, he was not prepared to do.

He may well have been wise to leave on a high. The style of management he adopted at Newcastle owed more to Saudi princes than to Marks & Spencer. He preferred to buy talent, often at enormous expense, than to nurture it himself. Thus, last year, he spent more than £26 million on three players alone. Yet Newcastle has no active reserve team and hardly any youth development.

Manchester United, by contrast, has an enormous youth scheme, which could provide much of its strength in years to come. A talented young footballer in Manchester could realistically hope to play for his home team. His equivalent in Newcastle would be advised to move west. Given that the city of Newcastle has

produced such players as Paul Gascoigne, Alan Shearer, Bryan Robson and Peter Beardsley, this disdain for nurturing home-grown talent is bad business.

It is also a strategy that would have gone down badly in the City. Buying players is hugely expensive. Training them is not. While any club will want to put aside some money for transfers, Newcastle has been spending a disproportionate amount.

The business of football does not lend itself easily to the stock market. A study by Deloitte & Touche has shown that Manchester United apart, the rest of the Premiership teams lost nearly £14 million between them, in 1994-95. Newcastle accounted for 68 million of that loss. Manchester United, which made a profit of £20 million, has to be seen as a special case. It is an international brand name, as famous on the streets of Addis Ababa as in Oldham.

Other clubs are likely to make profits only through repeated success at home and in Europe. Even the purchase of excellent players does not guarantee such form. They may be injured, suspended or let down by team-mates. Like a record company, football clubs try to rely on stars. Unlike a record company though, they cannot spread their risks, hoping that the profits from one successful artist will more than offset the losses from another.

So Mr Keegan might have found himself hemmed in by unacceptable constraints — under extreme pressure from fans and shareholders alike to win championships but with far less transfer money at his disposal. The chances are that he would not have lasted long. Newcastle United's strip may be black and white, but this story is not as clear-cut as the club's fans may believe.

HEROES OF THE DEEP

Great British failure — with a stiff upper lip

There is no hero as beloved in Britain as he who fails nobly. An adventurer who looks death in the face and emerges with a self-deprecating quip is the man who captures the nation's heart. Three times within the past three weeks Britons have come close to catastrophe, yet have drawn on reserves of determination and humour to survive.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes struggled on in pain until forced to abandon his trek across Antarctica. Even as the country was marveling at the courage of the stand-in pilot aboard the *Virgin Global Challenger*, who climbed out at 7,000 ft to jettison a gas canister as the craft was plummeting to earth, came the electrifying news of the rescue of Tony Bullimore, who survived five days in the hull of his upturned yacht. Bobbing to the surface, he asked rescuers for a cup of tea and sparked the joy of his wife. "The old dog is alive. He's bloody alive!"

Britain has lionised its failures ever since the defeat of King Arthur. Popular idols have been those who set themselves tasks that were beyond them, but when forced to concede, did so with uncomplaining grace. Effortless failure, characterised by stoicism, understatement and a refusal to blame others, is admired almost more than effortless success. Even military defeats have

burnt themselves into the nation's admiring memory: from the Charge of the Light Brigade to Rorke's Drift and Dunkirk, the men who seized glory from adversity have been celebrated equally with the victors at Agincourt, Waterloo and the Battle of Britain. Kipling's homily about treating triumph and disaster just the same is burned on the British mind.

Not every disaster warms a Briton's heart. A feeble cricket side that whinges about its incompetence is treated with well-deserved contempt. It lacks three essential elements of the Great British Failure: grit, guts and humour. An amateur ski-jumper, however, who risks life and limb in an Olympic contest clearly beyond him demonstrates a more British kind of sportsmanship, even if Eddie "The Bagle" Edwards had "the aerodynamic grace of a gherkin".

Richard Branson is unlikely to lose his position as Britain's most admired businessman. Everyone can identify with the human fears of Mr Bullimore, grizzled, brash and tough, during his ordeal, and his relief at his rescue; few can emulate his superhuman sang froid. "Thank God," he said, on emerging from the water, a sentiment voiced by John Major in India and by all who had given him up for dead.

Response to Pinter 'bugging' scenario

From the Home Secretary

Sir, I should like to respond to Harold Pinter's request to me (letter, January 9) to confirm or deny a scenario which he thought could happen once the provisions of the Police Bill now before Parliament are in place.

Intrusive surveillance by the police and customs of our most serious criminals has been taking place successfully for many years. The provisions of the Police Bill are intended to put these operations on a proper statutory footing. Their primary purpose is for the covert gathering of intelligence against our most difficult and intractable criminals.

If a police officer was disturbed in the process of installing a listening device, then there would be no point in continuing the operation. In such unlikely circumstances, the officer would no doubt leave as quickly as possible and the authorisation for intrusive surveillance of the property would be cancelled. Furthermore, the Bill provides a means for the householder to make a complaint to an independent commissioner, a specific avenue for redress which is not available at present.

Intrusive surveillance often provides the vital intelligence or the crucial piece of the jigsaw in bringing to justice those involved in organised and serious criminal activity.

The Police Bill strikes the right balance between giving our law enforcement agencies the opportunity to use the most up-to-date technology and methods available to combat this very real threat to our society, whilst providing effective safeguards and formal independent oversight to guard against any possible abuse.

Yours sincerely
MICHAEL HOWARD,
The Home Office,
Queen Anne's Gate, SW1,
January 8.

From the President of the
London Criminal Courts Solicitors'
Association and others

Sir, Harold Pinter's plight is, we fear, more serious than he thinks. When he is arrested he should answer police questions, for he has lost his right to silence (Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994).

Oh, when it comes to his trial he may find that the burden of proof has shifted on to him as a defendant (Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996).

Never mind; by the time he gets to trial the police will probably know what his defence is anyway, as the Police Bill will allow them to bug his solicitor's office and/or his barrister's chambers.

It is amazing to think all of those fundamental rights were lost with hardly a whimper from Her Majesty's Opposition lest they be thought to be soft on crime.

Until the general election we are in a very dangerous state of constitutional limbo where the rights of the citizen are being sacrificed by both parties on the altar of political expediency.

Statesmen have reminded us that the duty of the Opposition is to oppose. It is crucial that issues as important as those contained in the above legislation should be fully debated in Parliament. Since this seems unlikely, it must be the duty of the media to conduct the debate.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT ROSCOE,
President,
CHRISTOPHER MURRAY
(Vice-President),
SUE GREEN
(Junior Vice-President),
The London Criminal Courts,
Solicitors' Association,
8 Bow Street, WC2,
January 8.

From Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank

Sir, Harold Pinter should be more explicit. The Labour Party is certainly failing to oppose the provisions for electronic surveillance in the Police Bill; but the other Opposition party, the Liberal Democrats, is leading the fight against them.

The House of Lords will vote on my amendment to Clause 91, which would require judicial authorisation for any police bugging, on January 20. I hope Harold Pinter's friends in the Labour Party will join me in the lobby.

Yours faithfully,
RODGERS OF QUARRY BANK,
House of Lords,
January 9.

A stitch in time . . .

From Mr Colin MacGregor

Sir, Imagine my surprise to read in *The Cricketer* magazine: England discarded the traditional tour blazer when they flew out to Zimbabwe on November 26, in favour of black suits. David Lloyd complained that the formal dress was "too much" to send the message that we are here on serious business.

Might I suggest that a tailor is found to run up twenty blue blazers and grey flannels in double-quick time before further disasters occur.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN I. C. MACGREGOR,
7 Titchwell Road, SW18,
January 7.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Monarchy on the public agenda

From Professor Stephen Haseler

Sir, By the time I opened the republican case in Carlton TV's debate on monarchy last Tuesday (reports and letters, January 9), I was becoming aware of the bear-garden atmosphere that was about to engulf the programme. Yet, as the show progressed, my initial misgivings — about the soundbites, the heckling, the rowdiness — gave way to a sense of relief.

After all, a real national issue was finally being aired — if not debated — before a mass audience, and the public was being encouraged, no matter how inadequately, to participate rather than sit passively by whilst being instructed by "experts".

Before we condemn Carlton Television, therefore, we need to ask why such shows — and they are "shows" — reach and keep such huge audiences. Is it possible that our timid politicians, who seem frightened to raise any contentious issue at all, no matter how important, have created the vacuum into which mass "infotainment" TV is now moving? Is it possible that the outrageous unofficial gag still operated by the Speaker on parliamentary discussion of monarchy could also have contributed to the emergence of a new kind of forum?

Certainly the Carlton monarchy show exhibited all the vulgarity of mass British popular culture, but too much of the London-based reaction has been prissy. The British have strong views on monarchy and the royal, and attempts to stifle discussion will inevitably lead to "infotainment" supplanting serious and informed debate.

Carlton Television has helped place the monarchy, and its republican

alternative, firmly on the agenda. That is a public service if I ever saw one.

Sincerely yours,
STEPHEN HASELER
(Chairman), Republic,
PO Box 2648, London W14 9ZT,
January 9.

From the Chairman of the
Market Research Society

Sir, Phone-in polls, such as the one used on the monarchy debate, are no way to gauge the true opinion of the British public. They do little more than tell us which lobby group has been most successful in encouraging people to phone in.

This kind of exercise should be clearly distinguished from professionally conducted survey research which ensures that the views of a representative sample of individuals are obtained.

Yours faithfully,
D. V. L. SMITH,
Chairman,
The Market Research Society,
15 Northburgh Street, EC1,
January 8.

From Mr Jasper Archer

Sir, Carlton made much of the fact that their audience for the great debate had been "hand-picked". One wonders by whom? Perhaps, even more to the point, who picked the hand-pickers?

Yours etc,
JASPER ARCHER,
The Malt House,
Stapleford, Wiltshire,
January 8.

Screen test for 'Hollywood Lovers'

From the Chairman of
Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television

Sir, Anyone reading your report of January 4, "TV chief bans *Hollywood Lovers* series", might draw the conclusion that programme planning at Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television is conducted on the basis of capricious and quixotic decisions. That is far from reality.

An experienced senior programme executive is responsible for previewing all programmes which might cause concern, for a whole variety of reasons. If something worries him he brings the matter to the weekly meeting of executive directors who consider the evidence and collectively decide if the programme should be transmitted.

As a result of this process we last year decided not to transmit *Carnal Knowledge*, *God's Gift* and *The Good Sex Guide*. Two months ago we said

we did not intend to carry *Hollywood Lovers*.

I believe that independent television, as a service directed at the family audience, should be able to perform without recourse to gratuitous violence, sexual titillation and smut without wit.

If people buy videos, or subscribe to a pay-per-view service or go to the cinema, that is up to them. But ITV comes into the home without viewers having any clear idea of what is going to appear.

That being so, I believe we have to be responsible — even if withdrawing a programme does irritate some people.

Yours faithfully,
WARD THOMAS,
Chairman and Chief Executive,
Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television,
15/16 Bloomsbury Square, WC1,
January 6.

Nurses' training

From the Reverend
P. Rowntree Clifford

Sir, Contrary to the views expressed by the President of the Royal College of Nursing and Ms Anna Huxtable (letters, December 31; see also letters, January 7), I believe a rapidly growing number of patients and professional medical people would unhesitatingly endorse the excellent article by Nigel Lawson (December 28) on the widespread decline in the quality of nursing.

An academic degree may confer a certain social status, but it does not qualify those in the caring professions for the skills they need in tending the sick. Indeed, it may deter many of those who are desperately needed in our understaffed health service. Nursing is an art, not a science. Although a core of academically qualified technicians may be required to support the doctors, the urgent need is for more and better supervised caring nurses trained on the wards.

The Project 2000 scheme is likely to prove a disaster by transferring so much training to polytechnics. The inevitable decline might begin to be reversed by restoring the duties of the enrolled nurse and bringing back the crucial functions of matron and ward sister at the expense of a mushrooming administrative bureaucracy.

Yours faithfully,
P. ROWNTREE CLIFFORD,
The Reform Club,
104 Pall Mall, SW1,
January 7.

Visiting Australia

From Mr J. B. Griffin

Sir, Dr Neal Blewett, the Australian High Commissioner, says (letter, January 6) that holiday visitors to his country need to complete only a simple, two-page, visa application form.

I shall be one of the 300,000 UK tourists (Dr Blewett's figures) visiting Australia this year, and while Down Under I shall visit New Zealand. For the former I need a visa; for the latter I don't.

Holidays in recent years have taken me to the US, Canada, various Caribbean locations, most EU countries, Malta, Cyprus, Tunisia, Morocco and, most recently, on a tour including Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. For none of these did I need a visa.

Why Australia?
Yours faithfully,
J. B. GRIFFIN,
9 Oakwood Drive, Leigh, Lancashire,
January 6.

Combating dementia

From the Director of
Research into Ageing

Sir, The new drug which helps to alleviate the early symptoms of Alzheimer's disease for around 50 per cent of sufferers (Medical Briefing, January 7) is welcome.

About 75 per cent of all dementia in older patients was until recently attributed to Alzheimer's, but that figure has been revised down to 50 to 60 per cent.

The various kinds of dementia require different management, however. Those suffering from Lewy body dementia, for instance, which primarily affects a different part of the brain, have periods of lucidity which, if recognised, could be used by family and carers to involve sufferers in decisions regarding future care.

Biochemically, too, the diseases are different, which probably means that different drugs will be required to alleviate the symptoms of the two diseases. This may account for the "failure" rate of the two drugs currently on the US market for Alzheimer's.

More basic research into the mechanisms of the diseases of dementia is required to reduce the numbers suffering from these devastating and costly conditions.

Yours faithfully,
ELIZABETH MILLS,
Director,
Research into Ageing,
Baird House,
15-17 St Cross Street, EC1,
January 7.

From Mrs Jean Heald

Sir, Even expatriate Australians find it difficult to visit Australia these days. I have lived in Britain since 1934 but happened, by accident, to be born in Melbourne. I have been back to Australia on perhaps six or seven occasions, always on a British passport.

On our last visit in the autumn of 1995 we found we had to apply for visas. My (British) husband received his immediately and free. Mine was refused. I had to apply for an Australian passport at short notice. With train fares it cost me £87.

Yours sincerely,
JEAN C. HEALD,
Rebber House, 108 Nicker Hill,
Keyworth, Nottingham,
January 6.

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Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.

Finding the best home for ENO

From Sir John Tooley

Sir, The English National Opera management should not be deterred from its proposed move to another site in London by the charge of breaches of faith by David Mellor (report, January 7).

The acquisition of the Coliseum for ENO by the Government in May 1992, with some additional funding from the Sports and Arts Foundation, was an important and generous act, even if it could be perceived as a gesture of political expediency. But to accept that blindly as meaning that ENO must remain there indefinitely is folly and the negation of an opportunity for ENO and the Arts Council to re-examine ENO's place in the operatic life of the country.

London, by the size of its population alone, can surely justify the existence of two opera houses, but not two of similar size, and in the centre of the metropolis. Everything, barring perhaps box-office income, points to the work of the Royal Opera House being complemented by ENO in a smaller theatre (1,500-1,600 seats), strategically placed for audience access and providing the young singer with the conditions for development in a modestly sized auditorium and in a relatively unpressured situation.

The move of the Sadlers Wells Opera Company to the Coliseum from Rosebery Avenue in 1968 — a move largely determined by expediency and frustration following the rejection of plans to build a new theatre for Sadlers Wells Opera on the South Bank — changed the scene for the young singer adversely. It is true that the growth of regional opera has made up for some of that loss, but not entirely so; and there are also considerations of repertoire to be taken into account.

We should not lose this chance of looking again at what is really required for the future health and wellbeing of opera in this country, for performer and audience alike.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN TOOLEY (Director),
Royal Opera House, 1970-88,
2 Leicester Mews, W2,
January 7.

From Mr David S. Lindsay

Sir, In July 1995 you reported that the Royal Opera House wished to build at a relatively modest cost a prefabricated building close to London Bridge for use during refurbishment at Covent Garden.

Two difficulties were mentioned — the time needed to obtain planning permission (which you reported on October 31, 1994, had at last been granted) and the problem of what to do with the new building once vacated.

Today you report that English National Opera has finally decided to leave the Coliseum for a new building but there is no mention of the London Bridge site as an option. Is this not odd?

Yours faithfully,
DAVID S. LINDSAY,
42 Lyndhurst Drive, Sevenoaks, Kent,
January 7.

Peter's Irish friend

From Mrs M. O'Connor McNamara

Sir, Besides learning shipbuilding at Deptford (leading article, December 31), Peter the Great had the opportunity to meet and converse with the learned young Bernard O'Connor, MD, who fortunately recorded the discussions he had with the Tsar of Muscovy and his physicians on the blank pages of his 1697 edition of *Myographia Nova* by John Browne, surgeon to William III.

This volume is now in the possession of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and Dr O'Connor's notes are an insight into Russia in the 17th century based on the conversations he had with the Russian visitors between April 5 and April 19, 1698.

Dr O'Connor, an ancestor of mine, died in October 1698 aged 32. He was born in County Kerry, obtained his MD in Rheims in 1693, was a physician to John Sobieski III, King of Poland, wrote the first history of Poland in English, and was elected a member of the Royal Society.

Yours sincerely,

MAUREEN O'CONNOR

McNAMARA,

Carrigayle, Sheringham Close,

Staplecross, East Sussex.

January 6.

Eye of the beholder

From Mrs Anne McKay

Sir, "Gorgeous", "beautiful", "handsome" — if any of us 55 to 60 years ago had thus announced the arrival of a baby (letter, January 3) our contemporaries would have taken the mick and the child would later have been teased.

I was surprised to read in the announcement of my latest great-grandchild that she is "scrumptious" (which I admit she really is), but how nice that Matilda has arrived to one of these starry-eyed couples who sound so warm and welcoming — in contrast to an announcement I have never forgotten: "To John and Mary [so-and-so], yet another daughter".

Yours faithfully,
ANNE MCKAY,
Lynwood, Heath Rise,
Camberley, Surrey,
January 4.



English v. Schiano, 12-10-93
England v. France 12-10-93
and all 5 Nations Rugby
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Luther Vandross, Phil Collins
Kula Shaker, Hanson, Savage
Sunset, Oliver, Scorpions etc.
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THE TIMES

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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

FRIDAY JANUARY 10 1997

Merrett will not work in Lloyd's again after £1m deal

By JON ASHWORTH

STEPHEN MERRETT, the former Lloyd's of London deputy chairman, who was accused of "negligence, incompetence and dereliction of duty" in a High Court case two years ago, is to pay £1 million in damages, and will never work at Lloyd's again.

Mr Merrett, once one of Lloyd's most powerful underwriters, has struck a deal with Lloyd's, in return for protection from future legal

action. Major Ronald Ferguson, father of the Duchess of York, and Adam Faith, the actor-singer, are among names who lost more than £300 million on Merrett Syndicate 418. The £1 million will be paid to the 1,900-strong Merrett Syndicate 418 (1985) Names Association.

Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney-General, and Sir Rocco Forte, the hotelier, are among other names involved. Under the deal, the Merrett underwriting agencies have agreed to pay about £2.2 million to

Lloyd's, representing their share of the £225 million contributed by underwriters to the Lloyd's settlement. Mr Merrett will not, at any time, be a director, employee or shareholder of any company in the Lloyd's market. He will become a party to the settlement — protecting him from future lawsuits from names — but will receive no debt credits in the settlement of his final bill.

Lloyd's has agreed to drop its inquiry into Mr Merrett. The ultimate sanction of a £1 million "fine" and a self-imposed ban on working in the market is unlikely to have been matched by any disciplinary tribunal. Mr Merrett resigned as deputy chairman of Lloyd's in September 1993, after intense pressure from senior figures in the insurance industry. The Merrett names saw their efforts rewarded in November 1995, when they were awarded landmark damages in the High Court.

Mr Justice Cresswell, the presiding judge, expressed "serious reservations" about Mr Merrett's approach as an underwriter, in a damning 630-page judgment. Mr Merrett, he said, gave inadequate time and attention to his duties, and was "unconvincing" in his evidence in court. The judge was equally critical of Ernst & Young, which was deemed negligent in its role as auditor to the Merrett syndicate.

The Merrett deal must still be ratified by the Council of Lloyd's and the board of Equitas. John

Mays, chairman of the Merrett 418 action group, said: "I'm pleased that we've drawn a line under the litigation, and that there is a benefit to our members."

Mr Merrett was formerly one of Lloyd's most powerful underwriters. He joined the business built up by his father, Roy, in 1963, and became chairman of Merrett Group in 1976.

£1m profit, page 26
Pennington, page 27

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	4087.0	(-0.5)
FTSE All share	2008.15	(-1.29)
Nikkei	18072.87	(-606.51)
New York		
Dow Jones	6019.90	(+70.42)
S&P Composite	794.37	(+5.86)

LIB RATE

Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	96 1/8%	(95 1/8%)
Yield	6.79%	(6.84%)

LONDON MONEY

3-month interbank	6 1/4%	(6 1/4%)
Life long gilt	108 1/2%	(108 1/2%)

STERLING

New York	1.6846	(1.6840)
London		
\$	1.6841	(1.6832)
DM	2.6684	(2.6529)
FF	6.0098	(6.0531)
SP	2.3136	(2.2951)
Yen	195.11	(195.41)
C index	96.8	(96.1)

DOLLAR

London		
DM	1.5780	(1.5750)
FF	6.3220	(6.3326)
SP	1.2680	(1.2645)
Yen	115.18	(115.22)
C index	96.8	(96.1)

TOKYO CLOSING YEN 115.37

North Sea oil		
Brent 15-day Mar	\$24.36	(\$24.20)

GOLD

London close	\$368.85	(\$365.75)
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* denotes midday trading price

Lloyd's profit

The Lloyd's of London insurance market is expected to announce profits of more than £1 billion for the second-year running. Profits are expected to hold up well for the next few years despite falling rates and fears of over capacity in the insurance market.
Page 26

On the defensive

General Motors has received bids of around \$9 billion for Hughes Electronics, its defence arm, from both Raytheon and Northrop Grumman.
Page 27

Sears warning puts Strong job at risk

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

LIAM STRONG, chief executive of Sears, is facing intense pressure from institutional shareholders to quit after the Selfridges to British Shoe retail group yesterday issued a profit warning and revealed abysmal trading figures for the Christmas season.

It is thought that Mr Strong may be forced out within the next few days. The company said that sales at shops open throughout the second half of its financial year had risen only 1 per cent, and had then slipped to 0.5 per cent below last year's level in the crucial Christmas period. It said that pre-tax profits for the year to January 6 would be significantly below last year's £100 million.

One fund manager said yesterday: "We are fed up with it. It has been going on too long. Strong is being well-rewarded to do a good job, and he isn't doing it."

Another leading institutional shareholder said: "It is clearly not working. Strong

has been there five years, which is a reasonable amount of time for it to work. It is the job of the chairman to sort it out and I'd expect him to do so. The problem might be finding someone to replace him."

Sears insists that Mr Strong retains the backing of the board and of Sir Bob Reid, the chairman. A spokeswoman said that he would not be leaving the company.

However, one leading ana-

lyst noted: "Kevin Keegan kept on saying he wasn't leaving, until he did. Strong has got to go because it is now completely impossible for him to stay." He said he expects Mr Strong to leave in the next few days. "Advisers and non-executive directors have got to pass on the message from investors," he said.

Mr Strong joined Sears in 1991 from British Airways, where he was marketing and

operations director. He became chief executive in 1992 and last year received pay of £445,000, including performance bonuses of £52,000. He is on a two-year rolling contract.

Criticism of his inability to draw a respectable financial performance from Sears escalated after the sale of the group's shoe shops to Stephen Hinchliffe's Facia group backed.

When Facia collapsed last year, the shop leases reverted to Sears. The only known buyer of Sears' shares in recent weeks has been Philips & Drew Fund Management, which has now built up a stake of around 12 per cent.

Analysts believe that Sears is most likely to be broken up, with a bid from a property company thought possible. They estimate a break-up value of around 110p per share. However, Sean Eddie, an analyst with NatWest Markets, said: "British Shoe is a horrible disincentive to anyone who might buy the Sears group."

Sears is expected to announce the sale to Littlewoods of its Freemans mail order arm for around £350 million early next week.

The only factor holding up Sears' shares, which fell 4p to 87p yesterday, is the prospect of a special dividend from the Freemans' sale, analysts said.

City followers reduced their forecasts for full-year pre-tax earnings from more than £100 million to around £80 million.

Sears said that sales at British Shoe were down 2.8 per cent in the second half. Freemans sales were down 6.5 per cent, while at Selfridges they increased 8.2 per cent, below expectations.

However, Sears did see improvements at the Wallis Warehouse, Richards and Miss Selfridge womenswear chains.

Pennington, page 27



Maria Holton, of Thorn Lighting won honours for her expertise as an engineer

Holton lights the way for women engineers

By OUR BUSINESS STAFF

MARIA HOLTON was yesterday named 1996 Young Woman Engineer of the Year. Ms Holton, 29, is a major project engineer with Thorn Lighting at Romford, Essex.

The award is sponsored by the Institution of Electronics and Electrical Incorporated Engineers (IIEE) and the Caroline Haslett Memorial Trust. It aims to highlight the growing role of women in the

engineering industry and to encourage more women recruits.

Diane Delaney, 22, from Oldham, Lancashire, was winner of the Mary George Memorial Prize. Ms Delaney is a test engineer with MEM 250V, where her responsibilities include the testing of new and existing products and the calibration of equipment and instrumentation.

Christmas trade short of retailers' hopes, says CBI

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

CHRISTMAS trading failed to reach most retailers' expectations, according to a Confederation of British Industry survey out today. The survey will dampen fears that Britain is in the midst of an unsustainable Eighties-style consumer boom.

The findings are expected to be used by Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to argue against a rise in interest rates next Wednesday, when he meets Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England. However, the CBI believes that at best Mr Clarke may be able to postpone a rise until February,

and the Bank is still expected to push for an immediate move. Figures from the British Retail Consortium, out next Tuesday, will be watched for firm evidence of the sector's performance.

The CBI's distributive trades survey for December shows that the growth in sales volumes slowed compared with the previous six months and is "substantially" lower than predictions made in November. While sales volumes were well above those of a year ago, with about half of retailers reporting increased sales,

19 per cent said that sales were down. Most retailers expect sales to be steady in January. Alistair Eperon, chairman of the CBI panel responsible for the survey, said: "Most retailers had a good Christmas. The slowdown in the rate of sales growth reflects a major jump a year ago, so the increase in trade was measured from a high base."

Highest volume increases were enjoyed by bookellers, stationers and food sellers. Footwear, DIY, furniture, carpet, hardware and china experienced a slowdown.



Liam Strong is backed by the board but not institutions

M&S shopping for property

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

MARKS & SPENCER is set to become a landlord on mainland Britain for the first time by buying one of Edinburgh's biggest shopping centres.

It has agreed to buy the Gyle Shopping Centre in Edinburgh from the city council for £122 million, it revealed yesterday.

The 300,000 sq ft complex, which is close to Edinburgh airport and was opened just four years ago, will be the first shopping centre to be owned by Marks & Spencer on the British mainland. The only other shopping centre that its owns is Sprucefield, in Northern Ireland.

Marks & Spencer said it had taken up the option to buy the centre once the city council decided to sell because it wants to expand and reorganise its own store at the centre, which currently occupies 78,700 sq ft.

A spokesman for Marks & Spencer said that the decision

to buy the shopping centre did not imply that it intended to become a big player in retail property. "It is a one-off deal to secure our own interests," the company said.

Marks & Spencer prefers to own the freehold on its shops and so already owns much of the property it occupies. However, many of the shopping centres that have been built in recent years have been handled by developers, meaning that stores operating from them have not been able to own the freehold.

The other main occupier of the Gyle centre is a Safeway supermarket. In all, there are 65 tenants of the centre, which attracts some 300,000 visitors a week.

Edinburgh City Council said it had decided to sell the centre because it wanted to raise funds to spend on education and transport.

Temple, page 28

SFO fines Kleinwort Benson

THE securities arm of Kleinwort Benson has been fined £30,000 with costs of £7,900 and two of its former traders reprimanded by the Securities and Futures Authority for rule breaches (Robert Miller writes).

The SFA said Kleinwort had admitted that between July and September 1995 Alistair Truelove, a manager and trader in European convertible notes and warrants, breached City and in-house rules on marking positions on certain trades. He was also fined £7,500 with costs of £3,000. His assistant, Philip Steel, paid £2,000 in costs.

The SFA also said that Neville Ipe, an ex-employee of Merrill Lynch International Bank, was fined £7,500 for putting a private client in an unsuitable investment that incurred a \$47,270 loss. Full compensation was paid.

Tanvir Malik, another Merrill Lynch employee, was fined £15,000 for failing to record transactions properly.

Powerful pound swells corporate casualty list

By ERIC REGULY AND JANET BUSH

STERLING'S upward march claimed British Steel, Imperial Chemical, BOC Group and Bunnah Castrol as its latest corporate casualties and analysts warned that the barrage of earnings downgrades and profits warnings that have hit leading stock market companies this week is expected to continue.

Market strategists said the ratings of any company with significant overseas operations is under threat. Steve Wright, of BZW, the securities firm, said: "There are more to come and, in some cases, they will be massive downgrades."

The City began to revise its earnings forecasts in November, when the pound's rise has already begun to steepen dramatically — but what had been a trickle has turned into a flood. Even as British companies started to acknowledge the damage that sterling's rise is wreaking on their bottom lines, the pound rose even

further yesterday. It ended at 96.6 on its effective index against a basket of currencies — its highest level for four years.

It closed on Wednesday at 96.1, which was also the level at which it ended 1996. This was 15.6 per cent higher than at the end of 1995. During the course of last year, the pound soared 24 per cent against the yen, 18.7 per cent against the

mark, 16.9 per cent against the French franc and even 10.3 per cent against a resurgent dollar.

Many economists believe that the pound is likely to continue its climb, buoyed by relatively strong economic growth, accompanied by higher interest rates. Companies with large foreign sales whose costs are

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Lloyd's expected to top £1bn for second year

By JOY ASHWORTH

LLOYD'S of London is expected to announce profits of more than £1 billion for the second year running this summer. And profits are expected to hold up well for the next few years, in spite of falling rates, and fears of over capacity in the insurance market.

Profits for the 1994 underwriting year are estimated at £1.18 billion, according to Chatset, the insurance analyst. Lloyd's made a profit of £1.084

billion in 1993 — a sharp reversal on the £1.2 billion loss of 1992. Rates were high in 1993, and there were few of the catastrophes that dogged the market in the late 1980s.

Lloyd's, which has previously forecast 1994 profits of £1.008 billion, is due to publish the precise numbers in May or June. Figures are published three years in arrears. Chatset forecasts bottom-line profits of more than £1 billion for 1994, £850 million for 1995, and £600 million for 1996.

Of the individual markets, marine has performed exceptionally well in 1994 and 1995, and the anticipated profit in 1996 is above average. Non-marine has also done well, and aviation should produce a respectable profit in each year. The area of weakness is motor. Chatset has downgraded its profit forecast for 1994 from £109 million to £57 million. In 1995, motor is expected to show a loss of £12 million, compared with a forecast of £67 million.

Chatset said corporate capital's presence at Lloyd's had increased from 30 to 44 per cent in the past two years, prompting concerns about over-capacity. Chatset said: "With all sections of the market suffering from weakening rates, the last thing it needs is over capacity and a scramble amongst underwriters for business. The further influx of corporate capacity would appear to be completely unjustified." Capacity at Lloyd's is expected to increase by 3.3 per cent to £10.32

billion in 1997. Just over half — £5.78 billion — will be provided by 9,972 individual names.

Lloyd's has been licensed to transact business in Japan's domestic insurance market for the first time in the deregulation of the Japanese insurance market. Sir David Rowland, chairman of Lloyd's, will officially launch Lloyd's Japan Inc at a ceremony in Tokyo in March.

Pennington, page 27

Mortgage lending reaches 7-year high

By ROBERT MILLER

THE housing market received a further fillip yesterday with news from Barclays that mortgage lending has reached its highest level for seven years.

Barclays said that its latest Mortgage Index shows the value of gross mortgage advances in December 24 per cent up on the same month in 1995. Total gross lending for last year as a whole is expected to reach £71 billion — the highest since 1990. The bank said that last year's figure is 32 per cent higher than that in

1992, when lending fell to £53.7 billion.

The Barclays index follows the prediction this week from Savills, the international property consultant, that residential property prices could rise by as much as 12 per cent this year, compared with 8.5 per cent last year. Looking further ahead, Savills said that house prices could be expected to increase by up to 50 per cent over the next three years.

Barclays said that its consumer confidence research showed that there is a "significant" mismatch between homebuyers and sellers. The bank found that one in six people, or 18 per cent, are looking for a new home but only 8 per cent, or one in 13, is prepared to put their home on the market.

In regional terms, home-owners in London and the South East are most likely to put their homes on the market, reflecting the area's increase in house prices last year, said the bank. The least confident home-owners in terms of house price expectations come from Yorkshire and Humberside, according to the survey.

Jim Chadwick, a director of Barclays Mortgages, said: "There is no doubt that 1996 was a good year for the housing market and we expect the recovery to continue. Although further growth is unlikely to be at the high levels of the last few months, large annual increases of up to 30 per cent are not really sustainable or desirable in the long term."

As far as the immediate future was concerned, Mr Chadwick said that "uncertainty about interest rates and the general election are unlikely to dampen demand significantly, but will probably continue to attract homebuyers to fixed-rate mortgages."

Pledge to wind-up Exmoor

EXMOOR DUAL, the split capital investment trust, could be the subject of a new bid after the board's announcement that it will propose early liquidation if supported at an extraordinary meeting on February 3.

Analysts said that the door was "wide open", even after taking 3 per cent liquidation costs into account, the £18.2 million trust will still stand at a 13.7 per cent discount to net asset value. This could tempt an outside manager to buy out Panther Securities, which has 29.9 per cent of the trust's voting shares. Panther is seeking to oust the board and convert Exmoor into a property fund.

Liquidation could give ordinary shareholders 16.5p and income shareholders 62.2p. Panther's offer was 9p and 36p.



Tony Fraher, left, with Alan Hansen, who will be acting as consultant to the fund

Football fund kicks off amid doubts

By ADAM JONES

THE first fund investing solely in football clubs and associated companies was launched yesterday amid scepticism about the liquidity of the sector.

The Football Fund, run by Singer & Friedlander, is aiming to raise about £30 million initially. Tony Fraher, chief executive of Singer & Friedlander Investment Funds, claimed it was possible that the fund, an open-ended investment company, could grow as large as £200 million. However, there is scepticism over the ability of the sector to support an investment vehicle of this size.

The fund is employing Alan Hansen, the Match of the Day pundit, as a consultant on a three-year contract. He will analyse performance on the pitch, since league position affects a club's share price. Mr Hansen will also assess youth development policies — a good one can provide cheap players.

One broker said illiquidity in shares of unquoted clubs — several traded on OTC — made buying and selling difficult. Initially, the Football Fund will concentrate on football-related shares, including JJB Sports, Nike, BSkyB and construction companies involved in stadium building. British clubs will eventually account for 45 to 55 per cent of the fund. European club shares, such as Juventus, will also be held. The minimum investment in the fund is £1,000.

Pennington, page 27

Second energy sector role for Eggar

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

TIM EGGAR, the former Energy Minister, yesterday took on his second role at a company in the energy industry less than six months after leaving the Government.

His appointment as a non-executive director at Monument Oil drew sharp criticism from Labour. It

follows his appointment in November as part-time chairman of MW Kellogg, an engineering business that gets much of its work in the energy field.

John Battle, Labour's spokesman on energy, said that although within the law the move raised questions about the desirability of ex-ministers moving to jobs in

companies in areas with which they had dealt.

Mr Eggar, who is leaving Parliament at the election, will have special responsibilities at Monument for overseas interests. He is expected to be remunerated above the typical rate for a non-executive director at Monument of £15,000. His pay for Kellogg was tipped as a substantial six-

figure sum. He was not available for comment.

The Nolan committee, which conducted the review into public standards, recommended a wait of three months before Cabinet ministers should take up commercial appointments after leaving the Government.

Pennington, page 27

End in sight for VW dispute with Opel

THE long-running dispute between Volkswagen and Opel, General Motors' German subsidiary, is close to a resolution. An out-of-court settlement over claims that VW spied on Opel could be announced today. VW said: "It is possible that an announcement will be made. Not all the details are finalised. An agreement is very close to being worked out."

According to the Handelsblat newspaper, Klaus Liesen, the VW supervisory board chairman, and John Smale, GM's executive chairman, reached an agreement to settle the dispute. Under the terms of the settlement, VW will buy components from GM on a long-term basis and will shoulder a large part of GM's legal expenses. In return, GM will drop its US civil suit for damages against VW. Demands for an apology from VW have apparently also been dropped. The three-year old dispute centres on accusations that José Ignacio López de Armentia, VW's purchasing manager, was involved in industrial espionage when he left GM for VW.

French go-ahead for BA

BRITISH AIRWAYS yesterday won court approval to acquire Air Liberté, the insolvent carrier, and expand its presence in the French air travel market to more than 20 per cent. Dominique Leveque, president of the Créteil commercial court, said the court agreed to the plan presented by BA and Banque Paribas, its French partner, to take control of Air Liberté and invest £780 million. Although the French industry and Government were initially reluctant to allow Air Liberté to fall into foreign hands, M. Leveque said there was no "acceptable alternative plan".

New structure at AIB

AIB, the Irish banking group, has formed a new holding company for AIB Investment Managers and John Govett & Co. two investment management firms AIB acquired in December 1995. AIB Asset Management Holdings will be headed by Kevin Pakenham, who will remain chief executive of John Govett. Patrick Curran, managing director of AIB Investment Managers, becomes vice-chairman. Mr Pakenham said the new company would enable the two businesses to cooperate globally. In the UK, the two retail businesses have been combined and renamed Govett-Unit Trusts.

US wholesale surge

WHOLESALE prices in America recorded their biggest increase all year in December, as surging energy prices offset an otherwise calm inflation report. The US Labour Department said the producer price index advanced 0.5 per cent, after rising 0.4 per cent in November. The December rise was the biggest since December 1995's gain of 0.6 per cent. However, excluding food and energy prices, the core rate of inflation rose only 0.1 per cent, matching November's rise. Economists had forecast a 0.3 per cent increase in wholesale prices overall and a 0.1 per cent rise in the core rate.

Toy Options wins deal

TOY OPTIONS, the toy distribution and marketing company, yesterday won a licensing contract from the European consumer products division of Warner Bros. The Hollywood film studio, to design, manufacture and market toy watches and clocks in 35 countries. The moulded products will be based on animated Warner characters such as Superman and Batman. The contract was acquired through World Wide Licences, a Hong Kong company that was bought by Toy Options for \$1.6 million in December.

Goode in higher gear

THE decline in vehicle hire rates has bottomed out, according to Goode Durrant, the fast-growing car and van rental company, that reported a rise in pre-tax profits to £15.2 million (£13.4 million) in the half year to October 31. Earnings were 18.5p a share (16.3p) resulting in an interim dividend of 3.2p (2.8p). Michael Waring, chairman, said the recovery in the housing market was helping trading conditions and should set the scene for a record set of full-year results. Goode Durrant shares gained 9.5p to close at 48.5p.

Scholl sells Septivon

SCHOLL, the healthcare company that is selling non-core assets to concentrate on its footwear and footwear brands, yesterday sold Septivon, its antiseptic cleansing product, to Chéreau International of France for about £13.9 million. Septivon, which represented 10.8 per cent of Scholl's operating profits in 1995, was sold for the same price for which it was acquired in 1993. Scholl said that it is in negotiations to sell Laboratoires Valdor, a cosmetics business in France.

Contract boosts BNFL

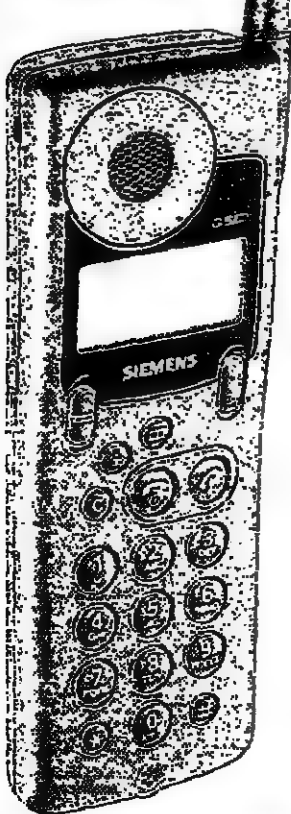
BNFL, the nuclear waste group, extended its international drive yesterday after the award of a £650 million US contract to a consortium, led by BNFL, to build and operate a waste-treatment facility at a former weapons research and design site in Idaho. BNFL will use some technologies developed at Sellafield on the project, while its engineering subsidiary will work on the robotics needed for the development.

Northern board changes

NORTHERN ELECTRIC, the regional electricity company, has made the first changes in board structure after its takeover by CE Electric of the US, bringing in eight new directors. John Sokol, chairman and chief executive of CalEnergy, CE Energy's parent company, is among the new names. John Griener, a director since October 1, 1996, has resigned. The UK electricity firm said, CE Electric paid £651 million for Northern, based in Newcastle, after narrowly winning a tightly-fought and controversial takeover battle.

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Compass lifts board bonuses

COMPASS GROUP, the contract catering company, awarded its directors total bonuses of £634,000 last year, up from £536,000 in the previous 12 months (Martin Barrow writes).

The rise in bonus payments followed a 50.1 per cent rise in profits before tax and exceptional items to £114.3 million in the 12 months to September 30. Total directors' remuneration increased to £2.7 million from £2.1 million previously. The latest total included salaries and bonuses paid to three directors who joined the board during the course of the previous year. The remuneration of Francis Mackay, chief executive, was £256,000, including a bonus of £105,000, and was little changed from £259,000 previously.

Warning after lottery mailshot

By PAUL DURMAN

THE Home Office has warned the public not to send money to overseas companies purporting to run lotteries.

An Australian organisation called The Territorial Lottery this week mailed British homes, congratulating people for having a chance to share in an £18 million tax-free prize fund. The mailshot, postmarked Budapest, highlights seductive phrases such as "You are the jackpot winner and are now a multi-millionaire." It contains numerous but empty statements including: "Be duly informed that the following has been approved unanimously by The Board and is fully guaranteed." It soon becomes clear that to

claim your "winnings" it is necessary to send £5 to a post office box number in Australia. No other address is given.

The Home Office said it is against the law to promote or advertise an overseas lottery within the UK. Although not yet tested in the courts, mailshots such as Territorial's would seem to be covered by this prohibition, part of the 1976 Lotteries & Amusements Act.

The Home Office has come across similar lotteries but it has proved difficult to take action because they are outside British jurisdiction. Territorial's mailshot carries pictures of winners, each of whom is said to have received £1 million. None is named.

PIA rules help to cut investment costs by 3.9%

Disclosure forces fall in fees

TOUGH new rules requiring insurance and investment companies to reveal their management fees have led to a drop in overall charges, according to a report (Marianne Curphy writes).

However, investors with a high-charging company could still pay five times as much as the clients of companies with much lower charges.

The regulations, known as disclosure, were introduced in the wake of the pensions mis-selling scandal and forced financial services companies to make their charges clearer and more comprehensible.

In its second annual report, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA), of which Colette Bowe is chief executive, says that charges overall have fallen 3.9 per cent in one year. Those companies that had been the most expensive showed the biggest improvements.

However, for a ten-year endowment unit-linked policy, one of the lowest-charging pensions from Equitable Life would cost £300 out of total contribution of £3,600 over five years based on premiums of £60 a month. A similar product from Hearts of Oak

Friendly Society, would cost £1,500 out of a total contribution of £3,600. Other high-chargers were Pearl, United Friendly (which has merged with Refuge to become United Assurance), Wesleyan Assurance Society, Windsor Life, Albany International, and Reliance Mutual.

The study found that there was little difference between the price of direct products and those sold by an adviser. The PIA also found evidence of investors bartering with advisers over charges if they intended to make large contributions to policies.

TOURIST RATES		
Bank	Bank	Bank
Australia \$	2.25	2.10
Austria S	13.71	12.82
Belgium F	67.79	53.49
Canada C	2.395	2.235
Denmark D	0.682	0.777
France F	10.72	9.82
Germany M	8.25	7.28
Greece Dr	13.71	12.82
Hong Kong S	1.20	1.00
Italy L	1.07	0.99
Japan Yen	27.17	25.62
Netherlands G	21.00	19.50
New Zealand \$	3.136	2.908
Portugal Esc	2.54	2.32
Spain P	16.66	15.72
Sweden Kr	10.72	10.72
Switzerland F	2.395	2.235
Taiwan N	15.41	14.81
Thailand B	15.41	14.81
UK £	1.00	1.00
USA \$	1.785	1.659

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Bowe fee improvements

Not-so-merry Christmas for retailers □ Reasons behind rash of profits downgradings □ More trouble ahead in Lime Street

Seasonal sales lack lustre

□ THERE are many pressing questions that trouble us in the dark early days of 1997. Can the monarchy survive? Why do some Scots drive around in cars advertising their nationality — in French? Will it ever be warm again? And after that nightmare dash for last-minute presents the weekend before Christmas, when the shops were crowded and everyone was so bad-tempered, why does nobody else seem to have bought anything?

The seasonal trading statements now trickling out from retailers are already a mixed bunch. Some of the specialists, selling jewellery, computers, greetings cards or sports goods, did well. The more broad-based chains, had a less spectacular Christmas. Sears has capped a dreadful 1996 with a profits warning. Argos, trading update today, is not likely to be exciting, by comparison with the expectations the company has built up. Others such as Next, Boots and Littlewoods will be out in the next few days.

It is hard to see how the Sears predicament can get worse, but the record suggests management is well up to the task of ensuring it will. Trading at Selfridges was lacklustre, even if most of the damage was elsewhere in the group. The most startling figure, a like-for-like fall of 0.5 per cent in all Christmas sales, will be

seized as evidence by critics of the management, but it is likely to be repeated elsewhere.

The kindest outcome for Sears, and the expectation of most analysts, would be for the group to be put out of its misery by a break-up, whether by present management or a hostile takeover. Either way one of Pennington's forecasts for 1997, an exit from shoe retailing and the departure of Liam Strong, the chief executive, would seem to be in the bag.

The rest of the retailers went into Christmas with high hopes, after a good November and fair start to December. The CBI's Distributive Trades Survey indicates, and figures from the British Retail Consortium on Tuesday are likely to confirm, that those hopes were not met.

There are some technical factors to do with when the holidays fall this year, but broadly there was a slump in the second week of last month and then a last-minute rush that may not have been enough to offset this. This compares with the strong Christmas performance a year ago, and it suggests some of the other

like-for-like comparisons this time may be closer to the Sears experience than the reported 8 per cent rise by Dixons.

These Christmas trading statements are an agreeable enough ritual that enlivens what are traditionally quiet times for the market. But the real significance is in the rate of sales growth for last year as a whole.

Tony Shires, at ESW, is shooting for 3 per cent and is not going to be too far off. That is a healthy enough rise by any measure, especially when you strip out the dogs such as Sears and House of Fraser. The high street has enough to celebrate already.

Forecasts are for changing

□ WHAT fun it will be this summer, browsing through the *menu gastronomique*, a chilled glass of *kir* at hand — and the pound sufficiently close to that ten-franc level we all really think it is worth, so no tortuous mental arithmetic when the bill arrives. But the City, with its sudden rash of profits downgradings, is not



PENNINGTON

are running ahead of inflation, and that low inflation environment does not allow these to be passed on to customers.

Add to that the pound, clearly the most significant factor behind the latest gloom, and the fact that continental markets do not appear to be picking up as fast as some had hoped. Analysts are always a bit behind the action in responding to rising sterling, because no one can yet quite believe in a strong pound. Assume sterling stays where it is, or European currencies fall, as they must. More downgradings look inevitable.

But it is always worth making a distinction, as the market often does not, between stocks that suffer through translation of profits earned abroad because those profits are worth less in sterling terms, and those of this week's victims whose trading has actually suffered. In the former category are drug companies, for example; in the latter the likes of British Steel, with the miserable job of exporting against a strong pound.

And never forget that analysts like moving their profit

forecasts, whether up or down, because this stimulates business. The rule has always been, forecast early and forecast often.

Still in a stew at Lloyd's

□ FUNNY place, Lloyd's. In one corner, council members are pinning on medals and collecting knighthoods. In the other, a former deputy chairman effectively submits to a £1 million fine, and pledges never to work in the Lloyd's market again. Out in the shires, more than 2,000 names are still waiting for cheques promised to them three months ago. Several hundred more are waiting for the day when the bailiffs come calling.

Ponder this for a moment, and one realises how little has changed. Reconstruction and Renewal (R&R) was supposed to be a harbinger of peace and tranquility. Hard-pressed names could write — or receive — that one last cheque, and kiss goodbye to the whole sorry business. No such luck.

The black-balling of Stephen

Merrett is one of several running themes. Before Christmas, Lloyd's admitted to embarrassing delays in sending out cheques to 12,000 names owed £570 million under R&R. So far, 9,800 have received £370 million, and no-one knows when the process will end. Stories persist of names receiving the wrong amounts. Court action by Lloyd's against non-paying names is expected to resume next week.

Profits in 1994 are expected to top £1 billion, but weakening insurance rates and increasing over-capacity could yet leave their mark. Throw aggrieved names into the pot, and one is left with a fiery dish with a lingering after-taste. Sample with care.

Reward for loyalty

□ TIM Eggar is gathering rewarding posts in the North Sea oil industry he did so much to promote as Energy Minister, unemployed miners and British Gas shareholders will note. But his latest job at old chum Tony Craven Walker's Monument Oil and Gas, following the chair of oil engineer Kellogg's UK arm, suggest that even an energetic 45-year-old Tory minister who timed his exit early is not finding that big one easily. Those MPs who fight and lose their seats may yet regret that they abolished unemployment benefit.

RTZ-CRA sells mine in dispute

By CARL MOOREHEAD

RTZ-CRA, the mining group has sold Century Zinc, the Australian company that is at the heart of an aboriginal land title dispute, to Pasminco for A\$345 million (£160 million). The buyer, a local, has paid a deposit of A\$10 million with the balance due after the issue by the government of Queensland of valid leases allowing the Century project to proceed.

Huge zinc deposits were identified by Century in Northern Queensland in 1990 and the company planned a development capable of producing 780,000 tonnes of concentrate a year, but the development has been dogged by claims that the indigenous aboriginal title to the land had never been extinguished.

RTZ-CRA said that it had invested more than A\$240 million to date in the Century Zinc project. Pasminco has contracted to take half the output.

Raytheon fights Northrop for GM defence arm

FROM RICHARD THOMSON IN NEW YORK

GENERAL MOTORS has received offers of about \$9 billion for Hughes Electronics, its defence arm, from Raytheon and Northrop Grumman in the first round of what is expected to become a fierce bidding war for the business.

Raytheon was told by GM that its bid was about \$500 million lower than that of Northrop and is likely to raise its offer.

Both, it said, Northrop are determined to win because they see the purchase of Hughes as essential to their survival in the restructuring of the US defence industry.

As the industry consolidates after the end of the Cold War, a few giant defence conglomerates have emerged, leaving smaller companies looking vulnerable. Hughes is one of the last major defence com-

panies up for sale. The danger for Raytheon and Northrop is of over-extending themselves by bidding too much since they would both have difficulties in financing a bid that included more than \$5 billion in cash.

Analysts said that Raytheon could have particular difficulty after its \$3 billion bid on Monday for the defence electronics division of Texas Instruments.

GM, however, has made it a condition of the bidding for Hughes that about half the purchase price must be in the shares of the bidding company. Raytheon and Northrop are therefore competing not just on price but on which company has the better prospects and can offer the best fit for Hughes.

Raytheon argues that it is a larger and more financially

stable group than Northrop. It also says that Hughes, which specialises in missile technology, would make a good strategic fit with its operations.

Raytheon and Northrop are both considerably smaller than the largest US defence groups created out of a flood of mergers and takeover during the past four years.

The largest of these deals, the \$19 billion merger of Boeing and McDonnell Douglas announced shortly before Christmas to create the world's biggest aircraft manufacturer, was triggered by GM's decision to put Hughes up for sale. Boeing went ahead with the deal when it became concerned that McDonnell would buy Hughes, which would have made it too expensive for Boeing to purchase at a later date.

Offer cracks down on special deals

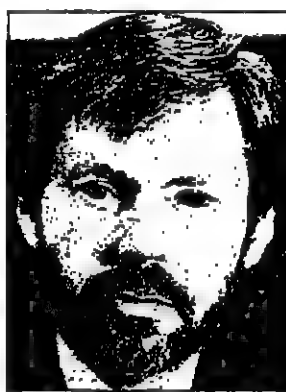
By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

THE electricity watchdog yesterday launched a crackdown on special deals offered to small businesses that lock them into contracts with suppliers well beyond the date by which they will be able to shop around for energy.

By April 1998, households and users of less than 100MW of electricity will be able to buy energy competitively, but some regional companies are offering small non-domestic users cheaper prices if they agree to long-term contracts.

Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, said he was "concerned" about discriminatory treatment of different customers and the damage it could do to the development of competition in 1998.

The Office of Electricity Supply also wants to make sure the deals are not being



Littlechild: concerned

made at the expense of other customers. All customers with the same tariff should enjoy the same opportunities from a regional monopoly supplier.

All the regional electricity companies are being questioned about such contracts after a series of inquiries to the regulator from customers.

Ex-Swalec chief to run McKechnie

By PAUL DURMAN

MCKECHNIE, the plastic and metal components group, yesterday announced the surprise departure of Mike Ost, the company's chief executive for the past ten years.

Mr Ost is to leave his £240,000 a year job in March. He will be replaced by Andrew Walker, who was chief executive of Swalec until the South Wales electricity company was taken over by Welsh Water at the end of 1995.

Vannal Treves, McKechnie's chairman, said Mr Ost's departure was a mutual decision taken after lengthy discussions. "He's 52. He's got one more big job in him," Mr Treves said. "It was time for him to go elsewhere, leaving the company in great nick."

McKechnie, which has a stock market value of nearly £600 million, recently reported annual pre-tax profits of just

over £50 million. Mr Ost yesterday repeated his view that McKechnie was poised for another year of significant progress. "The group is sound and has an excellent management team performing well, as will be evidenced by the next set of figures."

Mr Treves said Mr Ost will not receive a lump-sum compensation payment for the loss of his job. He will receive his salary, plus possible bonus entitlements, for a maximum of 18 months. Although McKechnie's profits have grown consistently, recent progress has depended almost entirely on acquisitions.

Mr Walker, 45, joined Swalec in November 1993. He was previously managing director of Dowty's polymer engineering division.

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Jurys checks in with 39% profits advance to £7.7m

FROM ELLEN MCCABE IN DUBLIN

JURYS, the hotel group based in the Republic of Ireland, believes its ability to attract a large share of the corporate business market should ensure that its new Belfast unit will not suffer as a result of the resumption of violence north of the border. The first Jurys Inn in Northern Ireland is due to open in April.

Barry Sheehan, director of finance and corporate affairs, said Jurys was attracted to Belfast because of the steady corporate business market there rather than the potential expansion of the tourist trade.

He said: "We, like everyone else, would like to see an end to the violence. But we think the business market is there and will always be there, and Jurys will get its share."

Yesterday Jurys, where Peter Malone is managing director, reported a 39 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £7.7 million (£7.7 million) for the six months to October last year. Turnover was up 17 per cent to just over £129 million. Excluding con-



Progress at Jurys was pleasing to Peter Malone

tributions from its new units at Cardiff and Dublin, turnover rose more than 15 per cent. Earnings grew 21 per cent to £14.5p a share.

The strong performance was fuelled by the booming economy in the Republic and the sustained recovery in Britain. The corporate business sector accounts for more than

a half of the turnover in its eight units in the Republic and four in Britain.

As well as its Belfast unit, Jurys plans to open a 151-bedroom hotel in Limerick and begin work on its 165-bedroom unit in central London soon. The interim dividend rises 13 per cent to 12.6p, payable on March 10.

Confidence lifts Clinton share price

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

CLINTON CARDS and the Electronics Boutique, the retailer of software and video games, both reported a surge in sales in December.

Clinton, Britain's largest greeting card retailer, reported sales up 15.2 per cent in the five weeks to December 29. It said: "Together with more buoyant trading during last autumn, the board is confident of comfortably exceeding current market forecasts." The statement sent its shares leaping 30p to 225p.

Electronics Boutique reported an even stronger 30 per cent rise in like-for-like sales in the month of December. For the 11 months to January 4, like-for-like sales were up 39 per cent.

Joe Firestone, chairman, said: "Last year's loss of £8.5 million will be history, as we expect to show a small profit for the year to January 31, 1997, as planned."

□ TJ Hughes, the discount department store group, said there had been good like-for-like growth in December. The shares rose 11p to 80 1/2p.

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Bates leaves Simpson's GEC to chair Premier Farnell

Weinstock lieutenant bows out

By PAUL DURMAN

MALCOLM BATES, Lord Weinstock's long-time lieutenant at the helm of GEC, has become the latest casualty of the start of the George Simpson era at Britain's leading engineering group.

Mr Bates, GEC's deputy managing director since 1985, is to retire from the electronics and power systems company at the end of March, after more than 16 years on the board.

Mr Simpson, the highly regarded former chief executive of Lucas Industries, succeeded Lord Weinstock as GEC's managing director last September, and is conducting a wide-ranging

overhaul of the group's interests. This is expected to produce a series of substantial disposals this year.

It was also announced yesterday that Mr Bates is to become non-executive chairman of Premier Farnell, the £2 billion electronics component distributor formed from a controversial merger last year. Mr Bates, 62, replaces Richard Hanwell, who retired last month.

Premier Farnell said it believed Mr Bates's "top level strategic experience" will be invaluable to its future development.

Howard Poulson, chief executive, said: "I am really looking to tap into his experience from being very senior in a very large company." Mr Poulson identified two

areas where Mr Bates could be of help looking at the organisational issues and "the stresses and strains that occur within large companies", and his understanding of running businesses overseas.

Mr Poulson said Premier Farnell still had to address "lots of cultural problems between different countries". He said the group had largely overcome the more centralised management approach that Farnell Electronics had found within Premier Industrial.

Mr Bates, a member of the Government's Industrial Development Advisory Board, is also chairman of Pearl Group, the Australian-owned insurer.

City Diary, page 29



Which economic trend will be your friend this year?

Forecasts lose their value when markets start to change direction

Happy New Year. It certainly has been so far — for anyone who stuck to the main financial trends of 1996 which I highlighted in the last *Economic View* before Christmas.

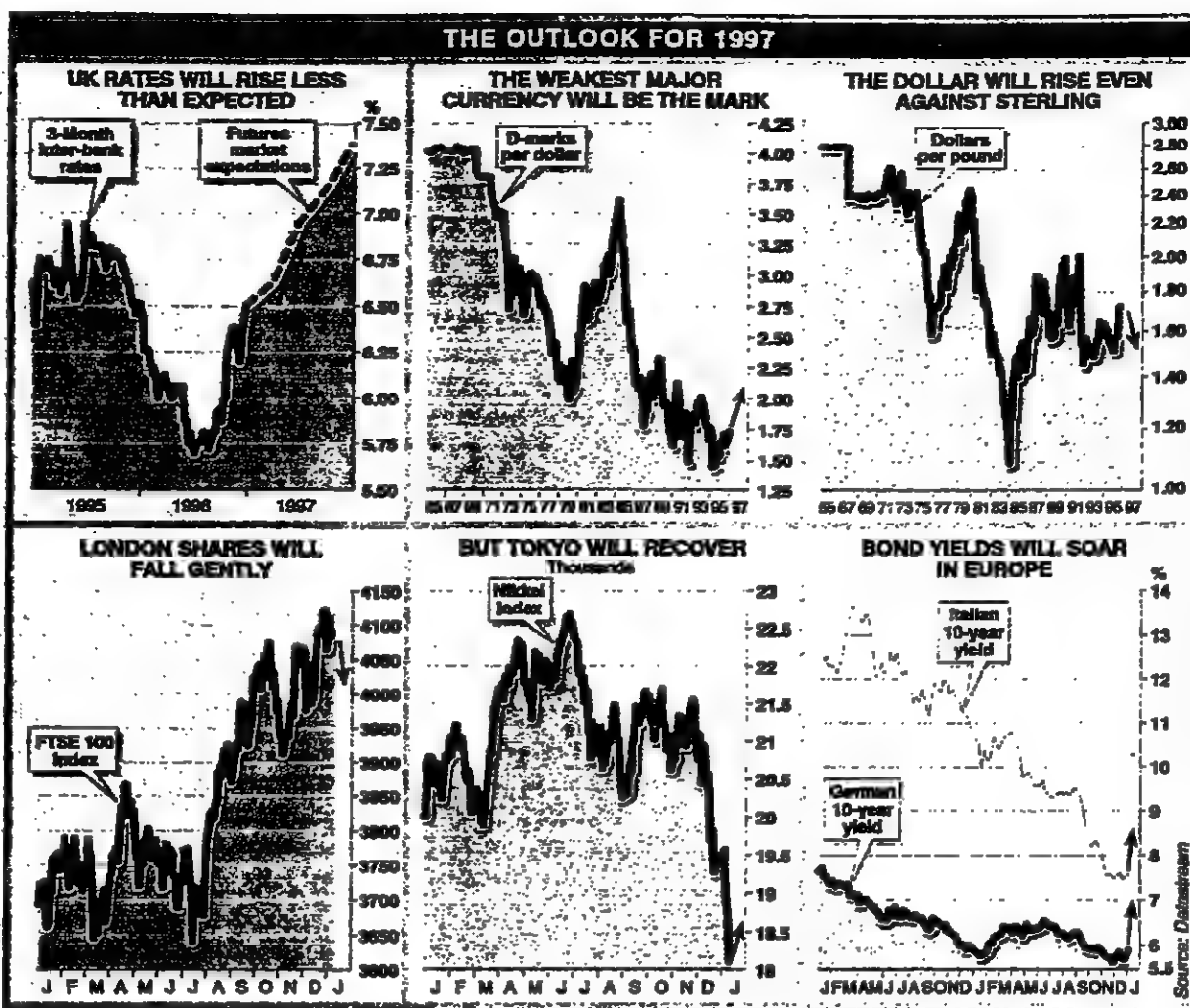
The dollar and the pound, both widely despised a year ago by investors, have continued rising sharply. Wall Street, which was supposedly overvalued a year ago, hit a new record on Tuesday while Tokyo — the market most favoured last January by professional investors — has suffered a further 10 per cent collapse in the past four days. Even Japanese and European bonds, two of the errant markets of 1996, which continually defied economic logic, have started behaving in a more sensible manner, falling sharply in the three weeks since Christmas. This bear market in bonds is a trend I certainly expect to see continuing in 1997 — especially in Japan, which is in the grip of another classic Tokyo bubble, and in Europe, where investors have forgotten about the hazards of EMU both to the countries that participate and to those, such as Italy, that are left outside.

In Britain, too, the favourable trends of 1996 are going strong. The question now is which of these trends we expect to continue and which will go into reverse. The trend is your friend: a motto used by many financial traders. But nothing is more dangerous than sticking to a trend which is about to turn. This is as true of the supposedly scientific business of macroeconomic forecasting as of the very unscientific financial soothsaying I like to indulge in at this time of year.

In analysing the behaviour of an economy in a period of more or less steady growth, nothing can beat a large and well-specified macroeconomic model of the kind used by governments, big banks and international institutions like the IMF and the OECD. But at times when the trend is breaking — when an economy is about to tumble into recession or take off on a sudden boom — the big conventional models are worse than useless.

The key question in assessing this year's economic prospects, therefore, is which economies are following and which are breaking trends. For countries on a path of steady growth, there is not much hope of second-guessing the Government and OECD forecasts. But for countries moving into or out of recessions, official forecasts are not worth the paper they are printed on.

In this second category, I



would put Italy and Japan. Italy is heading for recession and financial crisis, resulting from an impossibly restrictive fiscal policy combined with a sharp rise in the exchange rate. Japan could also fall back into recession if the stock market meltdown in Tokyo continues and the Ministry of Finance goes through with its *hara kiri* policy of raising taxes while slashing public works. I suspect, however, that fears of financial collapse will make the MoF bureaucrats reverse their fiscal plans. If so, Japan could enjoy a big revival in confidence and much stronger growth than the 1.6 per cent predicted by the OECD.

In the first group of countries, where official forecasts have to be treated with respect, I would include America, Britain, Canada, much of the developing world and — more controversially — both Germany and France, which will benefit from a dramatic weakening of the euro. If pressed, I would guess that America will grow a little more strongly than the OECD's 2.2 per cent forecast, which is largely conditioned by outdated assumptions about the "natural" rate of unemployment and America's maximum rate of non-inflationary growth.

Britain's growth rate, by contrast, may end a shade below the OECD's 3.3 per cent figure. I still believe that Britain will be the fastest-growing G7 country, but there will be no boom, partly because of last year's strength of sterling, but also because of a tighter than expected fiscal policy.

I described on this page on Tuesday some of the reasons why fiscal policy could be tightened after the election.

The main one is simply that an increase in taxes looks much more feasible politically than I imagined a few months ago. The Treasury, the Bank and the Labour Party are waking up to the availability of large revenue-raising measures outside the forbidden territories of income tax and VAT. As Margaret Thatcher realised in 1979, there is only one good time for a major shift in the tax burden: the Budget immediately after a big election victory. The most plausible reform would be the abolition of the dividend-imputation system which subsidises UK pension funds. Such a move would have big financial implications. British shares would fall, although less sharply than the pension fund Jeremiah's predict.

The ultimate burden of dividend taxes falls on the workers and employers — and workers, in particular, will increase their stock market savings to make up for anticipated pension shortfalls. The outlook for interest rates would be improved. The futures market is forecasting a rise in three-month interest rates from 6.5 per cent today to 7.4 per cent in December. I suspect that a modest fiscal tightening would be enough to keep base rates at 7 per cent or below. This would take much of the pressure off the pound. Despite this, the pound's up-trend should continue against the mark, which is set to become the world's weakest major currency. Against the dollar, however, sterling's up-trend may already have run out of steam at £1.70. If the dollar rises eventually to at least DM1.70, sterling will have to fall quite sharply

against the greenback to avoid moving back into the old ERM zone above DM2.80. The strong dollar is one trend that has now been running for almost two years and shows no sign of turning. I argued back in December 1994 that the dollar's 30-year downward trend against the mark and yen was about to turn. I now believe more firmly than ever that what started two years ago was a long-term secular trend and not just a cyclical blip in a continuing bear market. So far, the dollar's biggest move has been against the yen. But with the Japanese economy now poised for recovery (barring a collective outbreak of insanity at the Ministry of Finance), the yen should stabilise somewhere in the ¥120 to ¥130 range. Germany, by contrast, is now structurally the weakest economy in Europe. Its only hope of restoring international competitiveness is to abandon the "hard" mark and welcome a currency designed to depreciate much further against the dollar, the yen and even the friendless Swiss franc. The weak mark, in other words, seems to be another case where "the trend is your friend" will further noce.

Now let me turn to some big financial trends that may finally be exhausted. The most important is the huge run-up in share prices around the world. The widely feared crash on Wall Street remains unlikely, since American shares are only modestly overvalued even at 6,600 on the Dow. However, any further big gains ought to wait for profits growth to catch up with expectations. The most benign (and probable) outcome would be a long period of directionless trading which would frustrate both the bulls and the bears. However, a more dramatic alternative is possible — another big gain of 20 per cent or so followed by an equally sharp fall. Either way, shares in most leading markets are likely to end 1997 roughly where they started. The main exception (apart from London, which may be affected by tax and political considerations) could be Tokyo.

Most of last year was trendless for investors in Japan, rather like 1997 could be in other markets. But this year Tokyo shares are likely to fall sharply or to rise sharply — or quite possibly to do both. Sentiment about Japan is now at a bearish extreme. If the economy does slow, the pessimism will be fully justified, parts of the financial system will collapse and the Nikkei could quickly crash back to its 1995 lows. But if the bureaucracy relent and the economic recovery accelerates, Tokyo share prices could easily rise 20 or 30 per cent. In Japan, at least, the trend is certainly not your friend at the moment.

Returns to senders in Nigeria

Beware the poison penned by fraudsters, writes Robert Miller

HUNDREDS of wealthy Californian investors have lost millions of dollars to fraudsters who are using London as an international base from which to operate their scams.

Their plight has led senior fraud squad detectives in Britain to warn investors to be on the alert for a fresh wave of illegal schemes operating out of London, many of which are connected with Nigeria. These new scams are more sophisticated versions of the Nigerian letters that have flooded the UK in recent years. One was even sent to George Staple, director of the Serious Fraud Office.

Most Nigerian letters offer millions of dollars to UK and overseas investors who help bogus Nigerian officials smuggle money, which has allegedly been siphoned from Government contracts, out of the country. Detective Inspector David Crinnion, of the Metropolitan Police Fraud Squad, said: "Worldwide, the losses from these scams run into billions of dollars every year. Investors in over 51 countries, including Britain, have received Nigerian letters. In spite of our repeated warnings not to touch them people still prove all too gullible."

Mr Crinnion, who last year broke up a Nigerian scam led by fugitive "Chief" Frank Okosa, which resulted in a former Barclays Bank manager being jailed for five years, added: "Translated, these letters have the same theme — 'Dear Sir or Madam, I am a thief who has stolen a lot of money from the Government and I would like your help to get it out of Nigeria. These monies do not exist and never have.'"

Inquiries by *The Times* have established that two groups of US investors, attracted by the sound reputation of the City of London, were induced to part with more than \$3 million. They handed over the money to a Nigerian group — CBN International Clearing House — headed

by a Dr TD Spiff that operates out of an accommodation address in the West End of London.

The first group, which put up around \$2 million, used the international electronic banking system to wire money through the Holborn branch of a British bank in London for onward transmission to Nigeria. The investors were told that the funds would back a Nigerian oil field construction being carried out by a Costa Rican company.

Chris Pedras, one of the US investors, said: "We have been told by the Nigerian Petroleum Corporation of office in London that these contracts never existed." Mr Pedras alleges that Nigerian Government officials are part of the scam and receive a pay-off in return for the use of genuine seals. The Nigerian High Commission in London yesterday categorically denied that the fraudsters were Nigerian Government officials. The Commission pointed out that its Government has taken out newspaper advertisements worldwide to warn investors about the fraudulent nature of these letters and deals.

Mr Pedras and Charles Clark, a representative of the second group of US investors, which lost \$1 million and was also told the money was being invested in an over-budgeted oil field construction project, last month visited London to trace the missing funds. They tried unsuccessfully to lure "Dr Spiff" into a face-to-face meeting using further funds as a bait.

Tackling fraud, as well as money-laundering, is an international issue, often spanning five or six jurisdictions. The emphasis is on much closer co-operation between British agencies and their overseas counterparts. In one such move currently before the UK courts, a state agency in Florida has lodged a request with the UK authorities for the extradition of three Nigerian citizens, operating out of London, back to the sunshine state.



Staple: received letter

Ronson line on Guys and Dolls

GERALD RONSON at a production of *Guys and Dolls*, surely not the flamboyant tycoon, jailed for his part in the Guinness affair, was this week at Richard Eyre's production at the National Theatre.

An urban tale of gangsters shown the path of righteousness by an all-singing gang of missionaries, it's hard to imagine what the chief executive of Heron International made of the 1950s musical. The story of resilience and survival can only have appealed to the tough-talking father of four who once had a sign on his desk: "It can be done".

Jumped the gun

RED-FACED Chase de Vere Investments was forced to apologise yesterday for being too hasty. Earlier this week it sent out a rabble-rousing release extolling the virtues of the new instant-access investment account that it was launching with Flenings Save & Prosper, promising to match or exceed the average rates paid by ten of the UK's leading building societies. Only 24 hours later, the follow-up fax arrived — the launch has been delayed.

A MEMORABLE malapropism on the screens yesterday, after Sefton's proposal to replace the board of Envestrom. The announcement, quoted Ron Zwanziger, chief executive of the company specialising in diagnostic products: "Sefton will have two votes on a board comprised seven dictators, hardly a backdoor take-over."



"It's from Clinton Cards"

Bates bows out

MISERY at GEC, after news that Malcolm Bates is retiring as deputy managing director at the end of its financial year. An active member of a number of government and industry think-tanks, the 62-year-old has been appointed non-executive chairman of Premier Parnell, the electronics group. According to Sara Morrison, a director at GEC, "Malcolm will be greatly missed, he's the only person in the company who can write legibly. We'll never understand one another again."

Bigger splash

MIKE HOFFMAN, axed from Thames Water last year, is gradually going back to his engineering roots. A Rolls-Royce apprenticeship was a bit over the top as qualification to be a non-exec at Hornby, the model train king, but may help him to chair the management buyout team for the Government's Building Research Centre. Along with a board seat at PowerGen and chairing the council of Brunel University, this would be enough for most. But do not write the energetic Hoffman off from another chief executive post.

A FOLLOW-UP on my story that City Index was betting on the number of days that Richard Branson stayed in the air. The sports and financial bookmaker, which promised to donate any profits to charity, lost £800 in total.

MORAG PRESTON

A happy high street rip-off?

From Mr D. Alistair Hibbert, Sir. You quote John O'Sullivan of NatWest Markets (*The Times*, December 19, "Good tidings for Christmas sales") as saying: "This is clear evidence that the momentum behind high street spending is eroding consumers' sensitivity to price increases." In simple English does this mean "The public are happy to be ripped off?" Yours faithfully,

D. ALISTAIR HIBBERT, 5 Fox's Court, Penny Drayton, Leicestershire

Chairman's pay

From the Company Secretary, Direct Line Group Sir. Your newspaper published an article on December 31, 1996, which, due to a communication error, overstated the 1996 remuneration of Peter Wood, chairman of Direct Line Insurance. Mr Wood's total remuneration for that year, for his services to

Insurance companies contribute to ABI annual survey of fraud

From the Deputy Director-General of the Association of British Insurers Sir, Mr E.J. Smith asked (*Business Letters*, January 7) how the extent of fraudulent insurance claims is assessed. The Association of British Insurers (ABI) conducts an annual survey of insurance companies. They are asked for their individual assessment of the level of insurance fraud of different types for various classes of insurance, and the answers are collated to produce an overall result. The total cost has fallen from a starting figure of £800

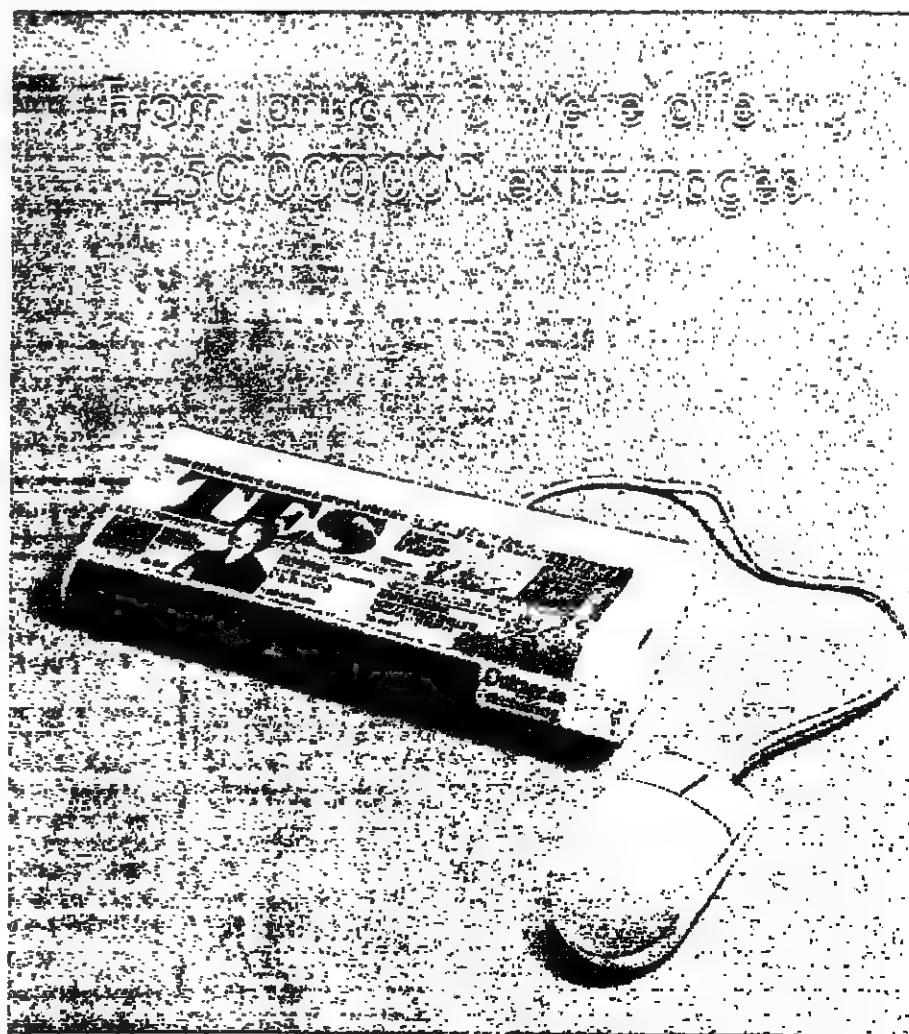
million in 1993, through £600 million in 1994, £585 million in 1995 to £560 million in 1996. This reduction has been achieved in two ways. First, the insurance companies have made strenuous efforts to improve the skill of their staff to spot potentially fraudulent claims and then to check them out thoroughly but fairly. Secondly, the ABI's Crime and Fraud Prevention Bureau (established 18 months ago) has provided a forum for insurance companies to share knowledge, particularly of new forms of fraud, and so improve the industry's anti-fraud capability and performance. A series of successful initiatives have been undertaken and publicised. We are not complacent about insurance fraud and we are determined to continue to reduce its impact on the vast majority of insurance policyholders, who are honest. Yours faithfully, TONY BAKER, Deputy Director-General, ABI, 51 Gresham Street, EC2.

Computer errors can be corrected

From Mr Nigel L. Denton Sir, Members of the Halifax Building Society (report, January 2) who feel that they will miss out on their share bonuses because of incorrectly entered computer records have recourse through the 1984 Data Protection Act.

This places the onus on the owner of computer data to hold only accurate information and to keep it up to date. Under Section 21 of the Act the Society must provide a print-out of the personal data held on any member who pays the appropriate fee. This information must be corrected if shown to be in error. Yours faithfully, NIGEL L. DENTON, 12 Maria Court, Southcoote Road, Reading, Berkshire.

Letters to the Business section of *The Times* can be sent by fax on 0171-752 5112.



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TES
THE TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

Nikkei dives amid fears about health of Japanese economy

By OLIVER AUGUST

DEEPENING gloom about the Japanese economy is engulfing the Tokyo stock market. Yesterday's share price plunge sent the Nikkei market average down 3.25 per cent to its lowest close in more than a year.

The nosedive, the latest in a series of steep stock market tumbles, was driven by fierce selling of Japanese banking shares coupled with rounds of futures-linked selling, brokers said.

The Nikkei ended the day 606.51 points lower at 18,073.87. The index has lost almost 1,300

points in the first four trading days of 1997. The yen also stumbled at the start of the year, briefly touching a nearly four-year low of ¥117 to the dollar on Monday.

The gloom descended last month when the Japanese Government unveiled plans to raise taxes to tackle budget deficit problems, even at the risk of squeezing the country's still tentative economic recovery. The markets are deeply sceptical about the ability of Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Prime Minister, to help to sustain economic growth while carrying out much needed structural reforms. Haruyoshi Mabuchi, chief strategist

at Nikko Securities, said: "The Government has not felt it urgent to hammer out a new plan just by the Nikkei 225's break through 19,000. It will be necessary for it to hit around 18,000 to prompt the Government to change its policy."

Economists will focus on the details of Mr Hashimoto's policy speech before parliament on January 20, but traders said that expectations were already low.

Mr Mabuchi said: "There is a possibility that the Government will not do anything and let financial firms close their books for the fiscal year in the red. Then the Nikkei may dive to

around 17,000." Yasumari Ueno, chief economist at Fuji Securities, said that few options were left for the Government. "It would be difficult for the Government to propose something effective on January 20," he said.

Hiroshi Mitsuoka, the Finance Minister, has been trying to pull private investors into the fight for recovery. He said that big firms must take the lead in boosting the economy and not rely too much on the Government.

The slumping stock market has renewed fears of a "triple bear" scenario in which Japan's currency, shares and bond prices all collapse at

once. But traders think that a "double bear" scenario of a free-falling yen and share prices is a greater possibility.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is in Tokyo to meet business leaders and government officials, yesterday urged Japan to forge ahead with economic reforms that he said Britain had found could hurt at first but ultimately yielded big rewards.

He added: "We did go through a pain barrier in a way, but the pain was not that bad. And the overall benefits to society as a whole are evident and are irreversible."

OFT under attack over report into BA and American

By JON ASHWORTH

BRITISH AIRWAYS and American Airlines will have to make further substantial concessions in order for their alliance to proceed, opponents stated yesterday.

Two rival carriers, United and Continental, said that draft conditions from the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) came nowhere near addressing their concerns. Continental said that the draft OFT report was a "disgrace" that could only have been influenced by pressure from Westminster. United called for

measures to ensure that competition was not stifled.

Airlines were given until January 10 to respond to the OFT proposals. Last month, the OFT said that BA and American would have to give up 168 take-off and landing slots at Heathrow — representing 84 flights — if they were to proceed with their alliance. It additionally called for wider access to their frequent flyer programmes.

Continental, the fifth largest US carrier, was damning in its condemnation of the OFT

proposals. Barry Simon, senior vice-president, international, said: "There is no intelligent person who could have come up with this report. It must have been dictated by a political person."

Mr Simon said that business air fares between the UK and America could rise 50 per cent within two years if the deal went through without further conditions being imposed. BA/American would speak for 60 per cent of seats between the UK and America and nearly 70 per cent of seats between London and New York. Mr Simon said: "BA will have eliminated its major competition. Consumers will be much more at its mercy."

United, the world's largest carrier, said that measures were needed to ensure the proposed alliance did not harm consumers and stifle competition. These included slot divestiture, a commitment not to penalise other airlines by asking them to pay for slots, and more equal access to airport facilities.

Cyril Murphy, United's vice-president, international, said: "It is absolutely critical that any undertakings on British Airways and American truly correspond to the actual loss of competition that will result from their proposed alliance. So far, the undertakings put forward provide neither the incentive nor the physical means for other airlines to offer a competitive counter-balance to BA and American."

Continental said that it alone would need 140 slots just to meet its primary goals. It would seek to compete on the London to New York run — "the biggest market in the world" — by operating daily services to Newark, New Jersey. It would additionally seek to offset BA/American's total dominance of the London to Dallas route by operating parallel services out of Houston, its domestic hub.



Longer-term prospects remain good at Rubicon, according to Tim Wightman, left, and Nino Allema, finance director.

Warning takes 30% off Rubicon

By MARTIN BARROW

RUBICON GROUP lost almost a third of its stock market value yesterday after the specialist engineer warned investors that profits would be "substantially below market expectations" in the current year.

Rubicon shares fell 102½p from 167½p in quick response before settling at 117½p, representing a fall of 30 per cent, and reducing the company's capitalisation to £103 million from £146.8 million. The profit warning was a nasty surprise for analysts who

upgraded profit forecasts as recently as November after an upbeat trading statement at the company's annual meeting.

The company, which earned pre-tax profits of £10.88 million in the last full financial year, said a slowdown in orders was evident in the second half of the current year, reflecting a marked deterioration in trading in two of its divisions.

The metal fabrications division had suffered because the pattern of trading in UK

personal computer manufacturing customers had failed to show its traditional upturn in December. The board now took a more pessimistic view of trading in the first quarter of 1997. Weak demand for aluminium castings from the European automotive industry had adversely affected the specialist castings division and order schedules are now expected to be lower in 1997.

Results for the six months to November 30, due January 29, will be in line with market expectations after charging

£1.2 million of rationalisation costs. In an effort to cut costs the company envisages employee reductions of up to 20 per cent in some divisions.

The company, whose chief executive is Tim Wightman, said that despite the setback cashflow remains strong. The board was "confident of all the inherent strengths of all the group's divisions", and that prospects for the following financial year remained good.

Rubicon would continue with its progressive dividend policy, the company said.

Construction slump keeps ASW in cold

By OLIVER AUGUST

ASW HOLDINGS, the steel and building materials company, has yet to escape the slump in the construction sector. The company said yesterday it had suffered further losses since June 1996, despite an increase in UK sales volumes.

ASW said: "The directors expect that trading would improve in 1997 over 1996, although demand in the short term will be affected by weather conditions in the winter months."

Margins in the UK and continental Europe improved in the second half of 1996 compared with the first half. But financial problems have not abated. The group's loan burden has forced it to sell various assets, including Allied Metals, over the past few months.

ASW said certain bank facilities had been revised.

although this is subject to completion of the Allied Metals sale, which is worth £33 million.

In the steel sector, ASW said it benefited from the lower price of scrap, a major input cost in the UK and continental Europe. Scrap prices decreased by 15-20 per cent in the second half of 1996. Steel stocks at downstream customers are also believed to have come down to normal levels.

Shares of ASW were unchanged at 33p yesterday, valuing the business at £27 million.

Last year the shares traded at a high of 95p before fears about a decline in steel prices raised concern about trading. In 1995 ASW earned pre-tax profits of £13.8 million on turnover of £641.9 million.

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LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

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LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 1985
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 1985
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Order of the High Court of Justice (Chancery Division) dated 10 December 1996, appointing the undersigned as liquidator of the above-named company, has been made.

NOTICE OF A MEETING

NOTICE OF A MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY TO BE HELD AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMPANY, 10, Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 3DF, on 17th January 1997 at 10.30 am for the purpose of considering and voting on the proposed resolution that the company be wound up.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

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Toad quits AIM for main market

By FRASER NELSON

TOAD, the car security company, has become the second company to move from the Alternative Investment Market to the official list, joining the main exchange with a value of £4.6 million.

Charles Parker, who joined the company as chief executive on Monday, said that the move was fuelled by a desire to attract more institutional support and to be listed on a more "respectable" market.

Mr Parker, formerly commercial director of Charter, said that the switch was essential to completing the raising of £7.1 million of funds.

He added that much of the money was raised on the provision that the company left the junior exchange.

Mr Parker said: "Some of

the institutions said they could not have so much as talked to us if we were not going on to the official list. The main market is properly regulated, it's where I come from, and I feel comfortable there."

Toad's shares have had a disappointing run on AIM. Placed at 115p 14 months ago, they have fallen almost without interruption, closing ½p lower yesterday at 84½p.

Over the same period, the company has secured contracts worth £4 million, against the £3 million it struck in sales in its last financial year.

Cirqual, the specialist engineering company, moved from AIM to the full list last month, but did not raise any money.

Builder to home in on Irish market

FROM EILEEN MCCABE IN DUBLIN

ABBEY, the housebuilder, will expand in the Republic of Ireland this year, its chairman said yesterday.

The company, which is registered in Dublin but whose main operations are in the South East of England, reported pre-tax profits of £12.5 million (£3.4 million) for the six months to October, up from £13 million last time. Earnings per share grew to 16p (15p).

Charles Gallagher, chairman, said that the improvement in the UK housing market that resulted in higher unit sales in the first half had

not yet prompted a full recovery in margins.

Abbey sold 67 units in the Irish market in the first half and 300 in the UK. It planned to take advantage of its landbank and the booming economy in the Republic to build some 250 units in 1997-98.

Mr Gallagher forecast an upturn for M&J Engineers, the UK plant hire business, and the property rental division and said it was "the first time in many years" that all three businesses were expected to progress. The interim dividend is 12.2p, up 4.8 per cent and payable on February 18.

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edited by Martin Barrow

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Martin Barrow is Deputy Business Editor of *The Times*.

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Inflation forecasts bring pay warning

By Philip Bassett, Industrial Editor

WAGE bargaining in Britain is likely to be tougher this year in the face of rising inflation, a new pay forecast for 1997 says today. The forecast comes as a new boardroom survey shows the continuing popularity of executive share options despite moves against them by the Government-backed Greenbury inquiry on top pay.

The warning on pay comes from Incomes Data Services, the independent wage specialist, in its latest analysis of wage settlements. After the rise in the retail price index, IDS says today: "The upturn in the rate of inflation to 2.7 per cent and the deterioration on the outlook for inflation over the coming year has put pressure on negotiators."

Suggesting that rising inflation is a "more difficult background" for pay bargaining, IDS details a range of City inflation forecasts, suggesting inflation will rise to between 2.8 per cent and 3.1 per cent in the first three months of this year, rising to 3.5 or even 4 per cent in the second half.

Higher interest rates are seen as the principal interest behind the expected rise in inflation. The IDS study says that, if such inflation forecasts prove correct, "then pay bargaining may be much tougher in 1997 and pay settlements may be pushed higher by rising inflation". While it says that the overall trend on pay is

remaining steady with settlements at 3 to 4 per cent, it notes some "awkward" market pressures on pay. Though the settlement floor has dropped to 3 per cent or below, some deals are higher, such as the 7 per cent rise in the local and key industry.

On executive pay, a new study on incentive arrangements casts doubt on the implementation of the Greenbury recommendations. The study, by the Monks Partnership remuneration advisers, suggests that the longer-term incentive plans recommended by Greenbury are unlikely to replace the share option schemes, at least in the immediate future.

Surveying 4,500 boardroom jobs in a sample of 600 companies, the Monks study says that 90 per cent of companies still have share option schemes though 10 per cent have now ceased giving options to board directors. But the Monks study says that "many of the alternatives to the share option plan are complex and potentially costly to administer. Share options may better meet the needs of some companies."

It says that there were some suggestions that Greenbury would lead to a common approach to incentive plans. "The effect has been the opposite and the diversity and complexity of plans continues to increase."



Peter Vardy, chairman, saw the company significantly outperform the market

Expansion at Vardy will create 250 jobs

By Fraser Nelson

REG VARDY, the innovative car dealer, is poised to create more than 250 jobs through a £15 million expansion plan designed to refurbish its dealerships and open more of its three-acre "superstores" for used cars.

The company is to spend £9 million on expanding its current sites and on expanding its exposure to Volkswagen, Jeep and Jaguar vehicles, which will create 100 jobs. It also plans to spend a further £6 million on opening three more superstores, which will create between 150 and 180 jobs.

Gracie Potts, chief executive, said the company aimed to expand in town centre sites, and was prepared to pay high premiums for the privilege. "We want to locate as close to the customer as we can," he said. "You can buy an acre in the wilderness for a lot less than the sites we are looking at. We are taking an investment view."

The dealer strongly outperformed the market in the six months to October 31, selling 36,000 cars — a 21 per cent lift against an industry average of 5 per cent. Stripping out the impact of acquisitions, the figure stood at 18 per cent at the half-way stage. Pre-tax profits were £8.2 million (£6.15 million), on sales of £345 million (£280 million). It opened two more superstores during the six months, making a total of five.

Vardy shares gained 23p yesterday, to a five-month high of 315p. Earnings were 10.7p (8.8p) per share, leaving an interim payout of 2.6p (2.25p), due on April 30.

Tempus, page 28

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

CIA Group settles dispute with ITV

CIA GROUP, Europe's second largest independent advertising media specialists, settled its legal dispute yesterday with the ITV companies by agreeing to pay them £1.8 million. The amount, equivalent to more than a quarter of 1995's pre-tax profits of £6.7 million, will be taken as a one-off charge in the 1996 profit and loss account. The results for the year to December 31 are to be announced in March. Several ITV companies, including Yorkshire Television and Granada, issued writs against CIA in October, alleging a shortfall in spending by CIA's clients.

The ITV companies threatened to withdraw credit lines and commission payments unless the dispute was resolved. Chris Ingram, chairman of CIA, said: "While we are pleased that the agreement has finally been reached, we are obviously disappointed about the impact, albeit one-off, on our profit record." CIA shares closed unchanged at 132½p.

CRH growth continues

CRH, the Irish building materials group, has spent £130.5 million on capital projects and acquisitions in continental Europe and North America. These investments follow transactions totalling £140.5 million last year. CRH expanded its DIY stores and its building supplies depots in The Netherlands. It also acquired a Dutch manufacturer of glass rooflight structures, a Dutch brick manufacturer and an 11 per cent stake in a publicly quoted French builders merchant. In America, CRH acquired sand reserves in New Hampshire and a Quebec polymer concrete company and asphalt plants.

TBI sale nets £49m

TBI, the property company that owns airports in Cardiff and Belfast, is raising £49 million through the sale of The Fountains office development in Brentford, Middlesex, to Springlake Business. The property comprises 140,000 sq ft of offices in four buildings and 34,000 sq ft of business units. The property is worth about £47.9 million and generates annual net rent of £4.3 million before interest costs. The proceeds will be used to reduce debt on the asset and to supplement cash resources. TBI negotiated a change to a break clause in the lease with the tenant before selling.

Druck profits static

DRUCK HOLDINGS, the electronic pressure and temperature devices manufacturer, blamed the strengthening pound, an increase in overheads and lower gross margins for static pre-tax profits in the six months to September 30, 1996. Profits remained at £4.4 million and earnings per share fell from 4.31p to 4.18p. The interim dividend rose to 0.54p (0.5p). At the end of September outstanding orders were 29 per cent higher than at the same time last year. Export markets such as Eastern Europe, the Far East and India rose significantly, and exports now account for more than 80 per cent of turnover.

Paribas in sale talks

PARIBAS, the French financial holding company, is negotiating the sale of Credit du Nord, the domestic retail bank, to Société Générale for Fr2.2 billion, it was announced yesterday. The transaction will take place in two stages, with Société Générale initially acquiring a controlling interest and making a pledge to acquire the outstanding equity within three years. Paribas wishes to withdraw from retail banking and concentrate on international investment, merchant banking and specialised financial services.

Boots tones up Italian presence in £4.1m deal

By Our City Staff

BOOTS, the healthcare and retailing company, has acquired Farmila Dermal, a privately-owned Italian skincare business, for £4.1 million.

The business, with an annual turnover of £2 million, is strong in the therapeutic areas of psoriasis, seborrhoeic dermatitis and dry skin. With sales are worth about £2

million in an £80 million market, Farmila Dermal includes Balta, Riadern and Leviax among its brands. Total annual sales for Boots Healthcare in Italy will grow to more than £15 million on the acquisition of Farmila Dermal.

Boots hopes to gain a 20 per cent share of Italy's therapeutic skincare market in the medium term through the Farmila Dermal deal, according to Barry Clare, managing director of Boots Healthcare International (BHI). That would bring the group's market share in Italy in line with its share of the market in France, where Boots acquired Laboratoires Lutsia for some £15 million in September last year. Lutsia has sales of around £40 million in a market worth £200 million.

Mr Clare said that he did not see any reason why the Boots group "should not achieve similar levels to

France in Italy in the medium term." BHI already sells cold cure and painkiller products in Italy and hopes to add its own-brand E45 skincare range to Lutsia's products to sell in the country, Mr Clare said. The E45 skincare range has around 60 per cent of the UK market but is not as well known as Lutsia's range in continental Europe. Mr Clare said its first new products for Italy would be launched in the spring.

BHI is still looking to buy interests in the German over-the-counter medicines market, Mr Clare added, along with any fill-in or complementary acquisitions.

"We want to be the leader for therapeutic skincare in Europe," he said, adding that the Boots group is already market leader in Britain. "With the Italian purchase, we have got the legs to exploit our product range in Europe," said Mr Clare.

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34 Forest Hill (RO) 2 nights £39pp for car and 4 adults. The Forest Hill Bougival is situated to the west of Paris on the banks of the Seine. Ideal for self-drive breaks in Paris, the Forest Hill is also within driving distance of the world famous Chateau de Versailles whilst accessible to the centre of Paris by public transport (about £3 return). The hotel has a bar and restaurant which overlooks the river. All bedrooms have private shower/bathroom, telephone, satellite TV and minibar. Free underground parking is available at the hotel. One child under 12 can stay free of charge when sharing with two full paying adults.

36 Montmartre Inn (BB) 2 nights £39pp for car and 4 adults. This attractive, recently renovated hotel is located close to the Moulin Rouge and the heart of Montmartre but also within 15 minutes walk of the famous department stores such as Galeries Lafayette. All bedrooms have private shower/bathroom, hair dryer, TV and mini-bar. One child under 12 can stay free of charge when sharing with two full paying adults.

RO = room only; BB = bed and breakfast; PP = per person.

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POP 1

David Bowie turns 50, but does age matter any more in the music business?



POP 2

A mixture of bohemian chic and preening slobbishness — how can Jonathan Fire Eater fail?

THE ARTS



POP 3

Beenie Man shows the eclectic power of contemporary reggae on his aptly named new album, *Maestro*



POP 4

Not content with making their mark in politics, the Spice Girls are also enriching the English language



Still running for the shadows in his golden years, David Bowie is nevertheless a mere stripling when compared to some of those still in thrall to the rock'n'roll backbeat

Rocking with the cavemen

In the week David Bowie turned 50, David Sinclair wonders what happened to the idea that pop was a young man's game

What an extraordinary fuss has been made over David Bowie's latest birthday. From lengthy magazine articles and weighty retrospectives on Radio 4 and BBC2 to respectful celebrations on fun-loving Radio 1, Bowie's "achievement" in reaching 50 has generated the kind of attention normally reserved for anniversaries of great pop festivals or momentous deaths. So why all the interest?

While not unconnected to the fact that Bowie has a new album, *Earthling*, released next month, the hoopla surrounding his ascension to pop senior citizen status has been stoked by the fact that it still

seems strange to think of musicians in their fifties behaving like fully functioning pop stars.

Bowie has done better at this than most. Many of his contemporaries from the 1970s have either died (Marc Bolan, Mick Ronson) or faded (Bryan Ferry, Ian Hunter of Mott the Hoople, Alice Cooper, Slade). Others, such as Elton John (who will be 50 in March) and Rod Stewart (who turns 52 today), have maintained their profiles by becoming family entertainers who now have more in common with croon-

ers like Cliff Richard and Neil Diamond than with the sounds of Britpop or the modern dance scene.

Bowie may have had some disastrous moments, but he has never completely lost touch. He plays hardly any of his old songs these days, and his most recent album, *Outside*, was his most confrontational work in many years. But perhaps this is not as surprising as it seems. The days when pop was perceived in much the same way as athletics — a sprint to reach the finishing line before the

age of 30 — are clearly long gone. Noel Gallagher will be 30 this year, Stephen Jones of Babybird is 31, Jarvis Cocker 33, Shaun Ryder 34, Ian Brodie of the Lightning Seeds 37 and Paul Weller 38. No one is suggesting that any of them should be thinking of retirement. And, while veterans such as U2 (average age 35) and R.E.M. (38) have obviously been around a long time, no one is saying that they are too old for the job, per se.

For this, all rockers of a more mature vintage owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the Rolling Stones, who have drawn a huge amount of ageist flak at every stage of their career over the past 20 years. Already into their thirties when punk arrived, and therefore written off as hopelessly over the hill even then, the Stones have steadfastly resisted the urge to cast off their outlaw image and accept the passage towards a graceful middle age. Now in their mid-fifties, they continue to push up the age at which it is possible still to claim bona fide rock star status. But even the most ardent Stones fan would accept that creatively the group is long past its prime.

"When you're in your mid-twenties you've got something that you lose," Eric Clapton told *Q* magazine when he was still only 41 (he turns 52 in March). "You've just got a certain amount of dynamism that you lose when you turn 30. You have to accept that, otherwise you're chasing a dream."

Their energy may become dissipated, but do pop stars necessarily lose their creative abilities as they get older? Is the ageing process inextricably linked with artistic decline (as opposed to popular decline)? Nothing could be further from the truth in other areas of the arts, so why should popular music be any different?

While many key performers such as Bob Dylan, Chuck Berry and Paul McCartney have drifted into an embarrassing artistic dotage, a surprising number of acts have seen their careers blossom in later years. At the age of 47 Lou Reed ended a long period in the wilderness with his

album *New York*, released in 1989, since when he has gone from strength to strength. In the same year Neil Young, then 44, released *Freedom*, an extraordinarily vigorous album which heralded the start of a six-year purple patch. Tina Turner was a sprightly 46 when she made the most unlikely comeback of all with her album *Private Dancer* in 1984, while John Lee Hooker, now 75, has sold more records in his seventies than during the rest of his career.

There is no doubt that the engine of creativity in popular music is most efficiently driven by factors relating specifically to youth, in particular boundless energy and a surplus of raging hormones. In an industry obsessed with image and change, young acts are always going to be more of the moment than their older counterparts.

But still one can point to artists such as John Hiatt, Iggy Pop, Shawn Colvin, Van Morrison, Richard Thompson, Peter Gabriel, John Mellencamp, Norma Waterson, Steve Earle, Aerosmith, Joe Ely, Bruce Springsteen and Johnny Cash, all of whom have produced (and continue to produce) some of their finest work while languishing on the far side of 40.

Their music offers something deeper and more enduring than the manic thrill of younger pop. Many have drawn on the established traditions of folk, country and blues, but their musical vocabulary remains that of a generation that came up during the era of rock'n'roll's primacy. Their continuing presence is gradually extending the musical and emotional range of pop, just as surely as the new performers who ensure its continuing vitality.

One band member learnt forward conspiratorially, and started singing a song I couldn't recognise in a rather urgent way. Seeing my confusion, his bandmate explained: "He wants to know if you want to go to Wichita." As we were just pulling out of Doncaster station, and had chosen to catch this train in order to make it home for *Police*, I merely kicked

him in a friendly way, and went back to balancing my head on the table. "No, no, no," he said, more urgently. "You know — Wichita! Wichita! The Wichita Line-man! Line, man."

To which, in a burst of thankful joy at having finally twigged, I yelled: "Oh, you mean cocaine!" At the request of other passengers, we subsequently moved to another carriage.

And as surely as night follows day, and dealers follow pop stars, so feeling a bit giddy and off follows going on a 48-hour bender. This is why the second-largest pool of slang is devoted to being drunk. "Trousers", lapped, trooled, wedged, gibbous, mingled off one's mung — all trainees lurching (young drinkers) pick up the lingo as swiftly as they pick up their pints.

Of course, when you reach the latter stages of being "gattered", things tend to go a bit "pear-shaped"; you may end up snogging some "spunk" (ugly feller) and have to "kick him to the curb" (get rid of him) when the "kris" (honky and cool) guy you fancy suddenly turns up.

The rise of Oasis has continued the trend for nationwide adoption of Mancunian slang, which started with the success of Happy Mondays and the Stone Roses. The "munted" (ugly fella) may take comfort in the fact that, in possession of "Gallaghers" (large eyebrows), they may still be able to pull. "Skanking" — a term originally used to describe the clipped rhythm guitar in reggae — is now being widely mouthed.

In Manchester it means standing someone up, while in the Midlands it's something generally "bobbins", or rubbish. Dance lingo, on the other hand, has become over-used: "Top one!" "Sorted", "Larging it" and "Massive" just make most people wince. But "cool" is still cool.

The main new entrant into language in the last year, however, has been provided by the Spice Girls. "Zigzagging" is the "super-califragilisticexpialidocious" of the Nineties — a word to cover every situation, particularly occasions when you would like to swear, but the company is too polite.

Cheesy taster but no extras

JONATHAN FIRE EATER *Tremble Under Boom Lights* (Deceptive BLUFF 038CD, £4.99)

THERE is a certain left-field, bohemian approach to rock'n'roll that only bands from New York seem able to carry off. The Cramps used to be pretty good at it. Royal Trux still have it in spades, the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion have taken it to wild extremes.

Despite their unpromisingly tedious name, Jonathan Fire Eater displays something of the same wasted outsider chic on their five-track mini-album, *Tremble Under Boom Lights*.

Singer Stewart Lupton has an instantly charismatic style, combining the preening slobbishness of Mick Jagger with the Gothic punk dramatics of Iggy Pop and Nick Cave. "Give me daughters," he yelps in a way that most parents would not find reassuring, despite his subsequent promise that he would "raise them to go to church with me".

The album's art-school ga-

rage band production is given a distinctive twist by the cheesy organ sound of Walter Martin and drummer Matt Barrick's fidgety tom beats, and while hardly a revelation, it could easily turn out to be a taster for great things to come. But don't waste time looking for the "bonus track" promised on both disc and sleeve. It doesn't exist.

Still only 22, Beenie (Jamaican for weeny) was a child prodigy who cut his first album in Jamaica when he was ten. His hoarse, dancehall rap delivery has echoes of Shaggy's "boombastic" style, but *Maestro* has a far greater reach, both musically and in terms of its subject-matter, than just about any other contemporary reggae album that comes to mind.

Switching between cheekily boastful rhymes about his overactive love life and hard-hitting hymns to the power of black spirituality, the album incorporates everything from the super-club swing of *Nuff Gal* to the loopy, pseudo-operatic declamations of the

ja-fuelled albums that used to dominate the reggae charts in the 1980s.

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title track. Whatever else he may be, when it comes to the diversity of his music, Beenie is no meanie.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Space Jam (Warner Sunset/Atlantic 7567-82961, £15.49)
A PART-LIVE action, part-animated movie about basketball, starring Bill Murray and Bugs Bunny, *Space Jam* is already a phenomenal success in America, where this soundtrack has produced new hit singles for Seal, R. Kelly and the Quad City DJs.

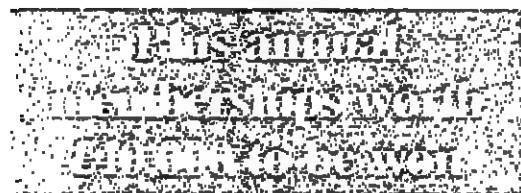
Featuring a host of R&B and hip-hop stars, including LL Cool J, Salt-N-Pepa and Coolio, the album is a quintessentially American experience. Numbers such as *Basketball Jones* (a hughenous rap by Barry White and Chris Rock) and the title track (a cheerleader-type, hip-hop chant about "slamming" and waving your hands in the air sound rather out of their element when divorced from the film, which is heading our way in the spring. Perhaps it will make better sense then.

DAVID SINCLAIR

World music and blues album reviews, Page 3

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- 2 Falling into You (Celine Dion (Epic))
- 3 Blue Is the Colour (Beautiful South (Gut Discs))
- 4 Evita (Original Soundtrack (Warner Bros))
- 5 Travelling Without Moving (Jamiroquai (Sony SP))
- 6 Ocean Drive (Lighthouse Family (Wild Card))
- 7 The Score (Fugees (Columbia))
- 8 Everything Must Go (Manic Street Preachers (Epic))
- 9 K... (Kula Shaker (Columbia))
- 10 Greatest Hits (Simply Red (East West))

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EDUCATION

We need to assist children not parents

The survey reported in *The Times* this week of families whose daughters hold assisted places at Girls' Public Day School Trust schools was clearly intended to encourage the Labour Party to think again about abolishing the Assisted Places Scheme. But it is likely to have the opposite effect. By highlighting the case of a girl who has accepted an assisted place at Birkenhead High School when she had been offered a place at a local state school with comparable academic results, the survey exposed the scheme's fundamental weakness.

Taxpayers' money is being used to fund a parental preference for an independent school when there is a perfectly good state school on their doorstep. I am all for parental choice but I do not see why I should pay school fees for other people's children unless their educational needs cannot be met in the schools that my taxes are already funding.

There is nothing wrong in principle with the State buying places at independent schools. It happens without controversy in many countries. But from the taxpayers' point of view it makes sense only if the places are used to enhance pupil

opportunity not just to extend parental choice. An Assisted Places Scheme can be justified only if it complements what the state system has to offer. The present scheme does not do that. There is no objective assessment of whether the child needs to move schools.

I do not blame parents for taking advantage of the scheme. Their overriding concern is to get the best education for their child. But the scheme would be so much more acceptable to the taxpayer and so much less vulnerable to political swings if it was seen to be based on the needs of the child.

In the early days it was possible to argue that in some areas the scheme did complement what was available in the state system because the independent schools involved were academic high-flyers. To give a bright child from a disadvantaged area an assisted place at Manchester Grammar School or the North London Collegiate School would seem to be a reasonable use of public funds to boost people. Why waste talent when the means to develop it are at hand?

But in recent years the scheme has been expanded to include independent schools



The future of the Assisted Places Scheme hangs in the balance. John Rae says a different scheme would fulfil the original intentions

with no academic pretension. "All the schools have been chosen for their academic record," the Independent Schools Information Service assures parents interested in the scheme. But 47 of the schools offering assisted places are so weak academically that they cannot make the top five hundred in *The Times* A-level league table. To argue that children need to move to these schools to get a better academic education is an insult to the large number of state schools with better results.

The onus is not good as the future of the scheme hangs in the balance. The independent schools want the best children they can get, not the children who

need them most. The Conservatives think that extending parental choice is justification enough. Labour and the Liberal Democrats believe there are no needs that cannot be met by the local education authority.

How wrong they all are. There are children whose needs are not being met in state schools and who could be helped by independent schools if those schools were willing to co-operate.

I am thinking particularly of children with learning difficulties. There are other children whose needs are not being met, but those with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, are a good illustration of how a reformed Assisted

Places Scheme could work. These children are ill-served by many local education authorities (LEAs) and would be well-served by those independent schools that have developed an impressive expertise in this area. There is a match between need and opportunity, precisely the circumstances in which it would be justified to use taxpayers' money.

Changing the basis of the scheme in this way would have a number of implications. The independent schools would have to accept that while other needs were not ruled out, most assisted places would be awarded to children who would not improve the school's position in the league tables.

The LEAs would have to accept that their schools cannot provide for the needs of all their children, something they would not find it easy to do. No one who has not tried to persuade an LEA to make special provision for a child with learning difficulties can have any idea of the lengths to which some LEAs will go to demonstrate that no special provision is needed.

The new scheme would be funded and administered centrally. Someone has to check the child's need and the school's qualifications for meeting it. However difficult that proves, it will be an improvement on the present arrangements, which include no check at all.

As the election approaches the independent sector is lobbying hard for the retention of the scheme. It would be a better strategy to bypass the politicians and to open discussions with the heads of state schools to see whether there is any common ground on reforming the scheme. State school heads were not consulted when the scheme was set up and may now be disinclined to get involved. They may even believe that the abolition of the scheme will reduce the size of primary school classes.

The members of the National Association of Head Teachers and of the Secondary Heads Association are, however, realists and they share with the heads of independent schools a belief that the needs of the child are paramount. They might also welcome a change that prevented the independent sector pushing some of their most promising pupils.

Public schools score own goal

Mark Dickson on the out-of-date prejudices that keep soccer off the independent school syllabus

At the opening ceremony of Euro 96 last summer, the role of English public schools in the origins of football was acknowledged and celebrated. The first organised games were played in these schools during the first half of the 19th century, and initial attempts to agree on a common set of rules of the game were made by their representatives in the 15 years before the formation of the Football Association in 1863.

The game is now the world's most popular sport. And with English football enjoying its most prosperous period for half a century, it is all the more remarkable that many public schools offer their pupils no organised football at all.

About half of the schools in the Headmasters' Conference omit football from the list of sports they play, as revealed in the *Independent Schools Yearbook*. In Scottish independent schools, the playing of organised soccer is almost unheard of. The situation in prep schools is only a little better than in the senior schools.

The popularity of football among children seems unquestionable. Is there a playground in the country where spontaneous kickabout games are not almost continuous — and not only for boys? Girls' football is expanding rapidly. Of course, many schools choose to specialise in other sports. Nothing wrong with that. Sporting preference is a matter of individual taste. But not to provide any organised football at all — depriving pupils of playing and learning Britain's national sport — seems hard for school authorities to justify.

This official disapproval of the national game can trace its origins to the rise of professionalism in the years immediately before and after the First World War. Many schools considered that money had been smeared football, and began playing sports that stayed strictly amateur. In later years there was, unquestionably, an



The "beautiful game", public-school style: a Shrewsbury player, left, heads the ball away from a Malvern College boy

element of snobbery involved, with football not considered a game fit to be played by "gentlemen".

Belying this theory, however, some of the country's most famous schools — Charterhouse, Eton, Shrewsbury, Winchester and Westminster — have always stayed true to their footballing traditions.

Today the arguments against permitting any football at all seem more and more hard to support. Professionalism has invaded almost every

team game at the top level, thus depriving other sports of any claims to holding the moral high ground. Football is cheap and easy to play, the pupils clearly want to play and, significantly, it is a relatively safe sport.

Football has become the world game; there is no country in which a footballer, after leaving school, cannot find a team to join, and few countries in which soccer does not provide the visitor with an interest to share with locals. The Football Association is

clearly eager to help schools to introduce soccer to their timetables. It has published the *FA Curriculum Guide*, showing how the game can fit into the national curriculum at key stages 1, 2 and 3.

It is hard to understand what reasons schools could give for not offering any football in their sporting curriculums. It is easier to believe that such a policy is motivated primarily by fear that their own favoured sport might be overwhelmed by the

popularity of football among pupils. Better to prevent their playing soccer.

We all have our own sporting preferences. Different schools will continue to specialise in their own particular sports. I am not trying to argue against that, or to denigrate any other sport. But to deprive pupils of the opportunity of organised participation in Britain's national game seems, nowadays, quite unjustifiable.

The author is master in charge of football at Shrewsbury School.

John O'Leary on changes in management teaching

The modern manager cannot spare the time to go on long courses at business schools. That would be to admit that his or her organisation can function without his leadership. Aware of this, many leading business schools are increasingly concentrating on executive courses. Some have even opened their own hotels to cater for the senior managers who use the programmes.

The MBA may still be the symbol of management education, but for schools such as Cranfield, Henley, London or Manchester, shorter courses are providing a growing proportion of income. Often tailored for a particular company, they can be part of a wider package of activities, including research and consultancy. At Cranfield, for example, executive education now accounts for 55 per cent of income. A £6 million executive centre opened last year with 180 rooms, plentiful leisure facilities and the most modern communications.

Professor Leo Murray, head of the school management, says: "The market has been buoyant for some time. We have been growing at 18 per cent a year for the past decade. But the whole character of what we offer is changing all the time; companies want more bang for the buck, and we have to tailor our courses to that."

As well as becoming more demanding, however, companies are more likely to enter into comprehensive and

Business schools aim at the executive

long-lasting agreements. Courses may last from a few days to several weeks, with the longer programmes usually delivered in more than one session. Participants, even for the short courses, come from as far away as Indonesia. Most will fit a course into a longer business trip to British interests.

Henley Management School has also seen big changes in executive education, always an important part of the school portfolio. It can house 120 students in recently upgraded accommodation.

Gareth Jones, the Professor of Organisational Development, says: "Executives no longer regard themselves as passive recipients of received wisdom. They have become more sophisticated about what they want from a course, and the relationship is now more of a partnership. As a result, the whole role of the business school is changing. The days are long gone when it was an adjunct of the university, conferring status on managers who would come for two or three months. People cannot afford to be away from their

desks for that long, and the main purpose of the course is to help executives to cope with high rates of change."

Like other schools, Henley is seeing a resurgence of the "open" courses, rather than those tailored to companies. The school offers a half-way house on its Executive MBA programme. Some big companies form consortiums to ensure cross-fertilisation of ideas within a tightly controlled course.

At Manchester Business School, the dividing line between executive education and traditional courses is increasingly blurred. Executives often take single modules of an MBA course, using it as the management component of a specialist programme.

Professor Peter Barrar, the Postgraduate Centre's director, says: "In schools like ours, executive education is the main growth area. The MBA is a very mature market, and the shorter course offers the same level of work with minimal disruption."

Competition among business schools is every bit as fierce as in the MBA market; both American and European schools also concentrate on executive courses. Harvard Business School, for example, has made overhauling its executive programmes a priority since the arrival of a new dean last year, and Insead, the top French school at Fontainebleau, just outside Paris, is also an attractive proposition for British managers.

John Gilmore reports on increasing worries in France about safety at school

Concerns about school security in France are growing. A report for the French Education Ministry claims that at one infant and primary school in ten there is a possible fire risk, at a time when French teachers and parents are increasingly worried about classroom and playground violence. They are demanding extra safety measures.

The report showed safety in evacuation procedures, poor construction and defective equipment. Stacks of materials littered classes and corridors, adding to the fire risks.

All schools up to lycée level reported 156,000 accidents in 1994-95, and as a result they sent 13,000 children to hospital, most for less than 48 hours. But 1,500 of those had to stay in hospital for more than two days. Sixteen children died during tuition, six of them while playing sport.

Jean-Marie Schleret, president of the *Observatoire National de la Sécurité des Établissements Scolaires*, said: "We must introduce a culture of improved security and safety in schools." His report pointed out that only 46 per cent of the Fr2.5 billion (about £294 million) allocated by the Government in 1994 over a five-year plan had been used to improve school facilities. It is believed that a further

French lessons with fears

sum of between Fr3 billion and Fr5 billion will be needed.

It is only four months since two French school teenagers died — one accidentally, the other by stabbing — within eight days of each other, prompting François Bayrou, the Education Minister, to ask every secondary school to provide him with a report on violence on their premises and ideas on controlling it.

At the Collège Henri Beaumont in the council estate Argenteuil region of Beauvais, in P.Oise, courses restarted only on December 16 after a month without lessons following an attack on a teacher. Jean-Michel Langlet, a sports teacher, was hit several times in the face by a student during a physical education lesson.

It was too much for anxious parents, teachers and students, who agreed that courses would stop until a proper level of protection and order could be

guaranteed. In the first seven days of November, 27 of 219 incidents involved fighting. Teachers at the school claim that lessons were continually disrupted by unruly students and that sometimes only 15 minutes' tuition was possible.

Jean-Claude Ropars, the college principal, said: "We are in the heart of an explosive area of high unemployment. Teachers are not equipped for such social conditions."

The college reopened the week before Christmas with a strong police presence around the school and 750 of the 850 students attending. The teachers reluctantly started lessons again. The Education Ministry did not meet all of the protesters' demands, but the college received an extra social assistant and five more security staff.

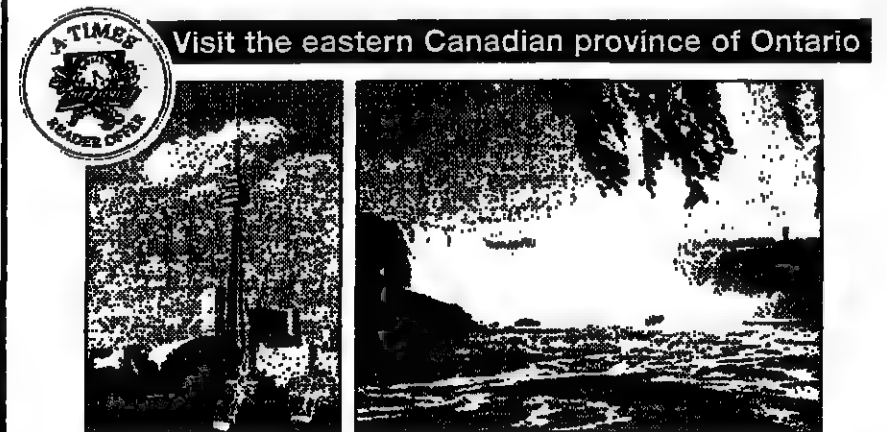
In other schools, similar fears have

led to different action. Last month, parents of students at the Collège Pesquier in the Gardanne Bouches-du-Rhône region prevented the teachers from entering the school in protest at the lack of surveillance. They demanded more supervisors.

René Salvat, a Paris lecturer, claimed: "There are two difficulties: the social problem of unemployed extended families, in which the adults have no job, and the need to revolutionise the rigid education system."

Guy Druet, the Sports Minister, has tried to change the education system by introducing in 200 regions a new five-day primary school programme of morning academic learning and recreational afternoon activities. The programme is aimed mainly at areas of high unemployment and by 1997 about 200,000 children are expected to benefit from the system.

But the Government's attempts to reduce public spending during the past year have been strongly resisted by the public. Jean Lorange, an analyst, said: "It's a no-win situation. French people want to pay less tax, but do not want anybody tampering with their personal doctor service. Meanwhile, unemployment continues to rise: about 12 per cent of the working population are out of work."



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TENNIS: BRITISH NO 1 MOVES INTO SEMI-FINALS WITH PREDECESSOR SINGING HIS PRAISES

Henman continues to impress

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

THE excellent start to the new year for Tim Henman continued yesterday in the quarter-finals of the international tournament in Sydney. Henman beat Alex O'Brien, of the United States, 1-6, 7-6, 6-4 to set up a match with Goran Ivanisevic, of Croatia, for a place in the final of the warm-up event for the Australian Open.

Henman looked far from convincing against O'Brien in the early stages, losing his first service and winning just one game in the opening set. But Henman's serve improved considerably in the second set, as he moved into a 5-2 lead, only to be broken again and to miss a set point as O'Brien fought back to 6-6. But the Briton took the tie-break 7-3 before winning the deciding set 6-4.

Steffi Graf said yesterday that she will be fit to challenge for a fifth Australian Open title. The world No 1 has missed the past two Australian Opens because of injury. Graf, the favourite for the tournament starting next week in the absence of Monica Seles, said: "I have practised a lot over the last few days and I am ready."

After a tiring flight from Doha, where Henman lost in the final of the Qatar Open to Jim Courier, there were fears that playing in Sydney would see an early exit for Henman as he prepared for the Australian Open. But his performances in the tournament to date have suggested otherwise. Henman has now beaten Rocco Pietrangeli, of Italy, Sergei Bruguera, the former French Open champion from Spain, and O'Brien — himself a man rising in the world rankings.

"I have played quite a few games in the last few weeks but I still feel full of energy," Henman said. "I am definitely feeling fitter and moving a lot better around the court. I was mainly concerned with preparations for the Australian Open, which starts on

Monday. I only hope I can continue with my form so far."

Mark Cox, the former British No 1, paid tribute yesterday to Henman's progress.

"He has a tremendous future. What impresses me most is that he has an inner belief in his own abilities," Cox said.

"He's a player with immense natural talent and has the capacity to play the big points well. One of his goals, I know, for 1997 was to get to a final, and by doing so in the Qatar Open he has had a good start."

Henman was rated No 24 in the latest ATP world rankings, but his victory over O'Brien should see that improve further.

Cox, who carried the mantle of the leading British player between 1968 and 1976, added: "Now he's really well up there and is capable of beating any player in the world. He is on a learning curve and every match is a new experience for him. He's developing physically all the time and has now developed more muscle and real power."

Ivanisevic will pose a bigger test for the 22-year-old Briton, looking comfortable in disposing of Sander Stolle, of Australia, in straight sets yesterday, 6-4, 6-2. The other semi-final will be contested by two Spaniards, Carlos Moya and Alberto Costa, who both won in straight sets yesterday.

In the women's event, Martina Hingis, of Switzerland, and Jennifer Capriati continued their winning ways. Hingis, the No 2 seed, survived a scare in the first set against Yayuk Basuki, of Indonesia, before advancing with a 7-6, 6-1 victory, while Capriati, of the United States, extended her winning streak with a 6-4, 6-1 triumph over her compatriot Amy Frazier. The United States are well represented in the semi-finals, with Mary Joe Fernandez and Lindsay Davenport both winning yesterday.

Three British players, Andrew Richardson, Mark Petchey and Jamie Delgado, all won their first-round matches in the qualifying competition for the Australian Open in Melbourne.

Results, page 45



Henman serves on his way to victory over O'Brien in Sydney yesterday

Australian officials put trust in rankings

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

AUSTRALIAN Open officials have stuck fairly rigidly to the world rankings in naming their seedings, avoiding a repeat of the controversy that affected the US Open last year.

Pete Sampras and Steffi Graf were yesterday named No 1 seeds in the singles competitions of the year's first grand-slam event, starting at Melbourne Park on Monday.

The draw will be made today. Unlike at the US Open and Wimbledon, where officials also consider a player's record on grass, the Australian Open has a tradition of relying on official world rankings in deciding seedings. Indeed, in the men's singles, the top six seedings replicate the Association of Tennis Professionals rankings.

Michael Chang, who lost to Boris Becker in four sets in the final last year, is the No 2 seed, with Goran Ivanisevic seeded third ahead of the French Open champion, Yevgeny Kafelnikov. Becker is seeded sixth, true to his ranking, one place behind Thomas Muster.

It was Muster who accused US Open officials of manipulating the draw and seedings when they departed from the usual format last year. The reaction from Muster and other players prompted officials to take the unprecedented step of scrapping the men's draw and starting again from scratch.

In the women's singles, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, of Spain, has been named the No 2 seed after the withdrawal of Monica Seles with a broken finger.

SEEDINGS: Men: 1, P Sampras (USA); 2, M Chang (CHN); 3, G Ivanisevic (CRO); 4, Y Kafelnikov (RUS); 5, T Muster (AUT); 6, B Becker (GER); 7, T Enqvist (SWE); 8, W Ferreira (BRA); 9, M Rios (CHI); 10, A Costa (ESP); 11, J Courier (FRA); 12, M Gustafsson (SWE); 13, J Sunde (SWE); 14, F Mardaras (GER); 15, M Sletten (GER); 16, A Panatier (FRA); 17, S Sanchez (ESP); 18, A Sanchez (ESP); 19, A Panatier (FRA); 20, A Panatier (FRA); 21, A Panatier (FRA); 22, A Panatier (FRA); 23, A Panatier (FRA); 24, A Panatier (FRA); 25, A Panatier (FRA); 26, A Panatier (FRA); 27, A Panatier (FRA); 28, A Panatier (FRA); 29, A Panatier (FRA); 30, A Panatier (FRA); 31, A Panatier (FRA); 32, A Panatier (FRA); 33, A Panatier (FRA); 34, A Panatier (FRA); 35, A Panatier (FRA); 36, A Panatier (FRA); 37, A Panatier (FRA); 38, A Panatier (FRA); 39, A Panatier (FRA); 40, A Panatier (FRA); 41, A Panatier (FRA); 42, A Panatier (FRA); 43, A Panatier (FRA); 44, A Panatier (FRA); 45, A Panatier (FRA); 46, A Panatier (FRA); 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Oliver Holt on how the Panthers and Jaguars took American football by storm

Novelty acts who have fast become top cats

I rang a relative in Jacksonville on Wednesday night to ask her what it was like to be part of a phenomenon. I wanted to know if what I had heard was true: that more than 40,000 people had left their homes in the small North Florida city in the early hours of last Sunday morning to make their way to the Municipal Stadium and welcome home their Jaguars.

She said that the reports were right. She knew because she had driven her teenage children to the stadium at about 11pm, after they had watched the Jaguars, a team that did not even exist 18 months ago, stun the nation by beating Denver Broncos to move within one victory of an appearance in the Super Bowl in New Orleans later this month.

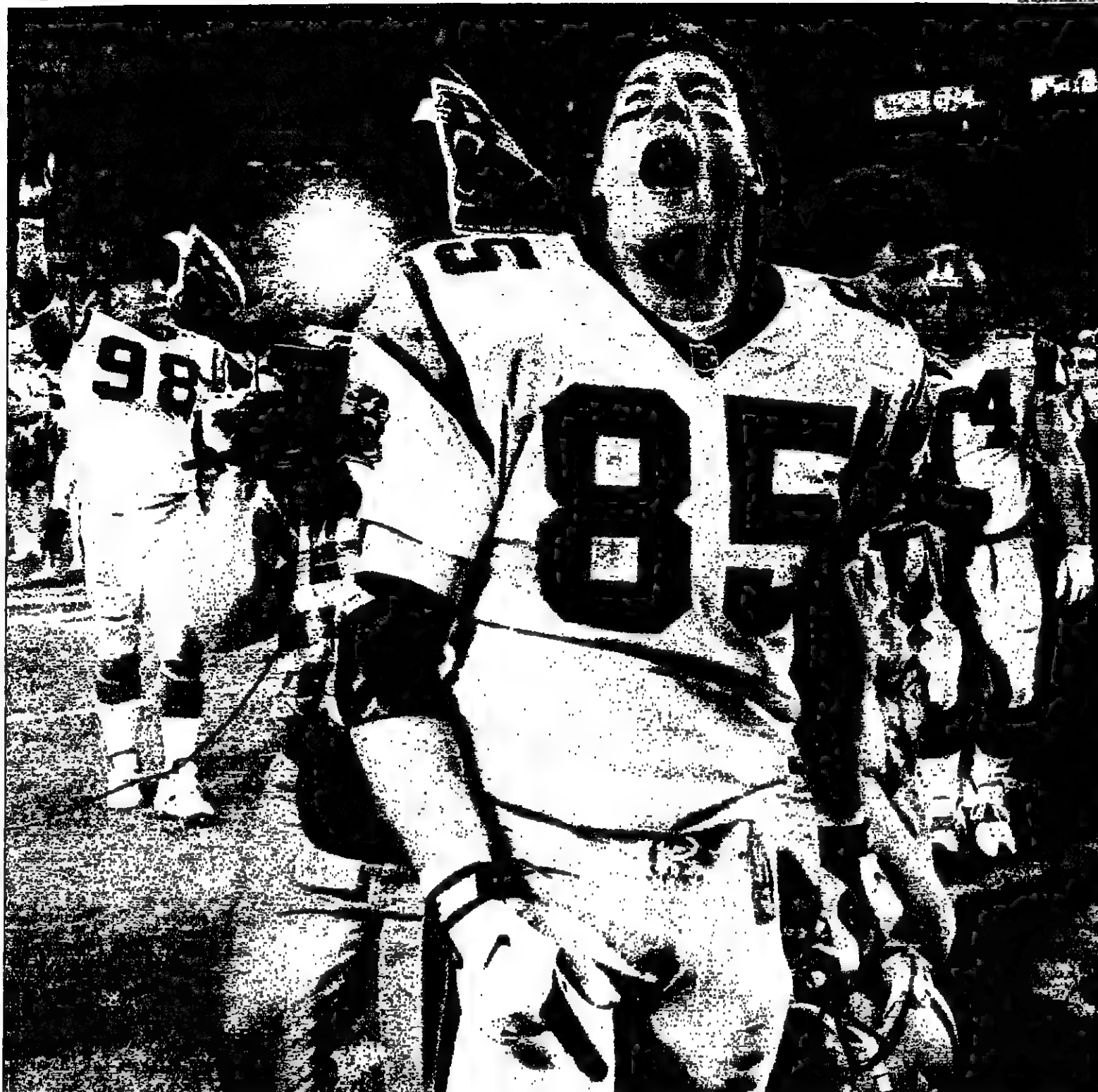
They waited there for more than three hours until the players arrived back from Colorado. The head coach, Tom Coughlin, made a speech. So, too, did the quarterback, Mark Brunell, and the team's leading running back, Natrone Means. The next day, the *Florida Times-Union* devoted its front page to the 30-27 victory, the coming of age. "They're for real," the headline screamed.

Everyone in America knows they are for real, now. Suddenly, a nation that is gripped by Super Bowl fever every January is facing up to the possibility that not only might Jacksonville be in the sport's showpiece event, but that they might also be facing Carolina Panthers, the other new team who skipped into the National Football League (NFL) in the autumn of 1995.

The Panthers unleashed their own tide of "Panthermania" when they dethroned the Super Bowl champions, Dallas Cowboys, in Charlotte last Sunday. If they beat Green Bay Packers in north-eastern Wisconsin on Sunday and the Jaguars conquer New England Patriots in Massachusetts on the same day, the unthinkable will have happened.

Unthinkable because it is like trying to imagine the 1996 FA Cup Final being won by a football team that has no place in one's consciousness today. The closest parallels, perhaps, are Wimbledon winning the FA Cup in 1988 and Blackburn Rovers' resurrection, culminating in their Premiership triumph in 1995.

Neither achievement, though, comes anywhere near the speed of progress made by the Jaguars and the Panthers, and all in one of the most commercially driven leagues



Wesley Walls, the Panthers tight end, voices his delight as a night of celebration begins in Charlotte after the defeat of the Dallas Cowboys

in the world, a league that demanded \$140 million entrance fees from both of its new boys when they boosted the league of 28 teams to 30. When this season started, the Panthers were listed at 75-1 to win the Super Bowl and the Jaguars at 150-1. Now, as the *Los Angeles Times* said last week, they are "in position to become one of sport's all-time novelty acts", a bit like two lowly, unseeded players contesting the men's final at

Wimbledon or two rank outsiders racing neck-and-neck for the line in the Derby. "Carolina would be a seven-point favourite," Bob Scuderi, the sports manager at the Stardust Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, said of a match between them. "But betting would be down. We get a lot of action on proposition bets, like John Elway throwing for 300 yards or Michael Irvin making ten catches, but it's kind of tough when you don't know

who even plays for these teams." In New Orleans, the host committee is getting a little nervous. The romance of a Carolina-Jacksonville match is one thing, but the organisers estimate that a Denver versus Dallas encounter would have brought up to 100,000 more fans to the city just to savour the atmosphere rather than actually attend the game in the Superdome. NFL officials, though, are

cock-a-hoop. In a league where parity is striven for uncannily, they have upped their game considerably since the last time expansion teams were introduced, in 1977. In their second season, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, one of the new teams, won only two of their 14 games.

The success of the Jaguars and the Panthers, a team who even denied San Francisco 49ers their traditional National Football Conference western division title this season, is a tribute to the way the league eased the new boys in and allowed them to compete with the pillars of the ancient regime.

The process began in February 1995, seven months before both teams were due to take the field for the first time. The 28 existing clubs were ordered to submit a list of six veteran players each for selection to the expansion teams, who were required to pick a total of

FOOTBALL

Gresley try to link up with the County set

By RICHARD HOBSON AND WALTER GAMMIE

THE Baseball Ground, home of Derby County since 1895, could stage non-League football next season after a plea from nearby Gresley Rovers to use the stadium temporarily. Rovers, who reside about 15 miles away, are four points clear at the top of the Dr Martens League premier division with two games in hand and appear to be cruising towards a place in the Vauxhall Conference.

Next month, they unveil plans for a new ground, but while work might be completed in time for the 1997-98 season, it will not be ready by the Conference's April 1 deadline for inspection. Derby, themselves, move to new headquarters at the end of the present season and are likely to maintain the Baseball Ground for reserve matches.

Gresley, managed by Paul Fother and his assistant, Garry Birtles, the former England striker, withdrew their original bid to join the Conference when they were told that a move into Derby represented a breach of rules. Since then, it has emerged that the Conference will accept Brighton and Hove Albion, who are bottom of the Nationwide League third division, even if the South Coast club are sharing with Gillingham, as is probable.

However, John Moules, the Conference secretary, said that ground-share schemes have to be in place a year before applications to join, but that a separate agreement commits the Conference to take the bottom club in the third division if the Nationwide League accepts the Conference champions.

Graham Westley, who had his leg broken and his ankle dislocated when leading the attack for Walton and Hertham last season, has returned to football as the manager of King's Lynn.

Westley, 28, is manager of a thriving organisation called "Survive". "Football is more important than ability," he has put similar energy into his new position. "He has brought in Graham Pearce, the former Enfield manager, as his coach. Jim Brown, with whom he formed a prolific goalscoring partnership for Kingstonian in 1988, and Ron Berry, former physiotherapist at Queens Park Rangers, to breathe new life into the club."

'It would be like two unseeded players reaching the final at Wimbledon'

tempt big-name players such as Kevin Greene away from the Super Bowl runners-up, Pittsburgh Steelers, to the Ericsson Stadium. In Jacksonville, the recruitment of players of a similarly high quality to go with the cast-offs has resulted in all home matches being sold out three years in advance.

The creation of both teams, the acceptance of their bids by the NFL, offers more evidence that the centre of gravity in the United States is moving south. In the 1990 census of the 20 fastest-growing metropolitan areas with more than a million people, 19 were in the south and west.

Perhaps Charlotte may not be every American's ideal NFL city — "If New York is the city that never sleeps," a professor at the University of North Carolina said, "Charlotte is the town that never wakes" — but together with Jacksonville, it is fast proving the doubters wrong.

Leon Searcy, an offensive tackle with the Jaguars, caught the mood. "The motto around here," he said, "is 'Why not us?'"

SPORTS LETTERS

Optimism for future of English cricket

From Mr Richard Penney

Sir, The anticipated demands for more changes in the structures and systems governing English cricket have followed the failures of the English team in Zimbabwe as surely as night follows day. It seems to have been forgotten that the England A team has just returned from a highly successful tour of Australia, while the England Under-19 team has acquitted itself well in Pakistan. Both these teams were organised and selected by the same individuals, within the same systems, as the senior team.

From this distance shortcomings in team management generally and player motivation in particular contributed to the disappointing English performance in Zimbabwe. However, the extent of the disappointment was a direct result of gross over-confidence beforehand in the ability of this English team to outplay Zimbabwe in Zimbabwe.

The sad truth is surely that, with Atherton in such poor form, none of the current English team (with the possible, ironic exception of the rejected Russell) would even be considered for a World XI or even a World Second XI. For the time being, the English cricket team is strictly second division in the international context. If this English team draws the imminent away series against New Zealand, it will have done well.

Being optimistic, the recent feats of the A team and the under-19 players should augur well for the future prospects of English Test cricket, provided the team selection, manage-

ment and captaincy is sufficiently intelligent and inspirational. Further tinkering with the structures of the English first-class game will be, at best, an irrelevancy.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD PENNEY,
Barrington Cottage,
Longborough,
Moreton-in-Marsh,
Gloucestershire.

From Mr Alan Challoner

Sir, There can be no doubt that top professional sportsmen are working in a privileged situation. How many people, at the higher end of their profession, could get away with a public admission such as Michael Atherton's, that "I've not been playing for working for the rest of us" well for a year now, and there are technical problems to address.

Most people in a normal job could expect the brown envelope if they had worked as badly as that.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN CHALLONER,
13 THE CHALLENGE,
Bodelwyddan, Denbighshire.

From Mr Angus Irvine
Sir, The decline of England's cricket has been inevitable ever since our local education authorities decided, some 15 years ago, to discourage competitive sports, particularly cricket, in state schools and, where possible, to sell off the school playing fields to developers.

At the present time these policies are occasionally reversed, often with the help of Lottery grants towards plant and equipment. But, by and large, today's children do not

have the opportunity to play games at school, as previous generations were able to do.

Every one of us who is interested in the future success of the England cricket team, and in the character-forming benefits of young people being allowed to play sports at school, should take every opportunity to urge school governors to lift these unkind restrictions. At the same time the Government must prohibit the sale of any more school playing fields.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
ANGUS IRVINE,
NFI Farm,
Hook Norton, Oxfordshire.

From Col J. H. McGuinness
Sir, As one who has had no interest in professional sport for 60 years, I was fascinated to hear that a chicken farmer took a hat-trick against England (report, January 9). Is there, perhaps, a case for bringing back a few Gentlemen to join the Players in the England side?

Yours faithfully,
JAMES MCGUINNESS,
Pen-y-Bont Fach,
Cynwyd, Cwrtwen,
Denbighshire.

From Mr Gavin Choyce
Sir, Banks, Cohen, Wilson, Moore et al. Most sports fans of a certain age can recite by heart the names of the only England football team to win the World Cup.

Will today's sports fans come to remember the following list with similar awe and affection: Gooch, Atherton, Hick, Thorpe, Fairbrother, Crawley, Rhodes, Gough, DeFreitas, Udell and Benjamin?

They are, of course, the members of the side which, on a never to be forgotten day in January 1995 at Brisbane, became the only England cricket team ever to win an international cricket match (Test or one-day) against Zimbabwe.

Yours faithfully,
GAVIN CHOYCE,
19 Kildare Terrace, W2

Boats at risk on the ocean

From Mr Bill Finnis

Sir, I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw the picture of a capsized yacht in the *Southern Ocean* on the front page (January 7). How could anyone in their right mind go to sea in such a vessel? A sixty-foot long boat which was barely safe to sail on a park lake, an almost non-existent keel, an unsupported rudder and five tons of water as movable ballast.

The utterly unsuitable hull shape should never have been taken to sea, the keel is part of the (to my mind) unseaworthy hull design, and unsupported rudders are notorious for snapping off, even in the seas around the British Isles.

If this boat was taken back, and this is not unusual when ocean sailing, the water ballast would have shifted to the lower side and, with the help of the wind on the wrong side of the sails and the hull shape, the boat would have had no choice but to capsize whether the skipper was asleep or awake — and he could have done nothing to stop it.

For many years there have been thousands of yachts quietly crossing oceans and getting there safely under their own steam. They, too, met excessive winds and seas, but they set out in properly equipped boats designed to go to sea and cause no problems for others to clear up. Not for them the expensive searches by merchant shipping, naval vessels and aircraft and all done without the ballyhoo that accompanies these ocean racing characters.

Yours sincerely,
BILL FINNIS,
Tamaru,
Turpin Lane,
Kilby Cross,
Essex.

Sports Letters may be sent by fax to 0171-782 5211. They should include a daytime telephone number.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

One of the more difficult plays in the game is to lead into a tenace to give your partner a ruff, hoping that you will later make a trick in the suit with your high card. An example cropped up in the 1995 Malta International Pairs.

Dealer North	E-W game	Match-pointed pairs
	<p> ♠ AQ 103 ♥ Q976 ♦ 1084 ♣ AQ </p>	<p> ♠ KJ854 ♥ A8 ♦ J3 ♣ 10964 </p>
	<p> ♠ — ♥ 32 ♦ AKQ9752 ♣ 8732 </p>	<p> ♠ — ♥ — ♦ — ♣ 8762 ♠ KJ1054 ♥ 8 ♦ — ♣ KJ5 </p>

Contract: Three Hearts by South. Lead: one of diamonds.

Playing five-card majors and a strong no-trump, North opened One Diamond. East overcalled One Spade, and I bid Two Hearts. West passed and North raised conversationally to Three Hearts.

West led the ace and king of diamonds. I ruffed and played a heart to the queen and ace. East took the ace of hearts and returned a heart. The rest was straightforward — I won the heart in dummy, ruffed dummy's third diamond in hand, took three rounds of clubs and played a spade to the ten. When East won the either hand led into the ace-queen of spades or gave a ruff and discard. So at least I made ten tricks, though most declarers made the same ten tricks in Four Hearts.

I hope you can see the defence to hold the declarer to nine tricks. East must play a spade after winning the ace of hearts. West ruffs, and East will come to the king of spades. I think East might find this defence. As East has bid spades, if West had a spade he surely would have led one through the ace-queen when he held the first trick.

□ The 1997 Malta Festival will be played in Silema from February 15 to 21. Details from Mario Dix on 00356 340640. Fax 00356 372683.

□ Refreshers articles will resume in a couple of weeks.

□ Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

HINNY
a. To snigger
b. A booby
c. An equine

PALINOIA
a. Memory
b. Repetition
c. Italian lace

UROPYGIUM
a. A bird's bottom
b. Euro boredom
c. Glue
GOSSOON
a. Young man
b. A diving bird
c. To weave silk

Answers on page 42

KEENE on CHESS

By RICHARD KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Hastings round-up

Today concludes my reports on the annual Hastings Chess Congress, the premier tournament of which has traditionally been the UK's strongest chess tournament since its inception in 1925. The second tournament at Hastings, known as the challengers' section, leads qualifiers through to the following year's Premier. This year, the challengers' section was won in a late round by the Lithuanian grandmaster Igor Rastvorov. In an early round, the early leader, former British champion James Fiske, as well as surprising Luke McShane, the 16-year-old British prodigy, and the former children's champion and chess coach, Michael Dwyer, were eliminated.

White: John Blackman
Hastings Challengers
December 1996

December 1990	
Queen's Gambit	
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A break for Johnathan, consumed with zeal

He isn't a blonde, he won't wear short skirts and he doesn't answer to the name of Juliet, Kirsty or Alice. Life at the BBC cannot be easy for Johnathan Maitland.

Help, however, was at hand. Anne Robinson, whom many a young journalist owes a career was off doing something else for a couple of weeks and generously passed the office keys to the only authentically crumpled member of the *Watchdog* team. "There you are, Johnathan, you have a go."

So Maitland, a man normally only happy with a telephone tucked under each ear, and his head up a Zambusi, took to the air. "Welcome to our first ever look at the world of entertainment," he said, donning a positively raffish black velvet jacket and casually unbuttoned red shirt for *Watchdog*. *Watchdog* is a television show, not a person. It began well enough, with one of those *Watchdog* moments that

makes his job so worthwhile. The newly-knighted Paul McCartney (narrator) was preventing the widow of a former Beatles roadie from selling hand-written lyrics, worth up to £60,000 if McCartney (hooray) stopped disputing ownership and let them go to auction. He would not, but shortly before Christmas, Maitland told us breathlessly, a McCartney aide arrived at Lily Evans's modest front door and suggested a "private arrangement," provided there was no fuss. Why had he changed his mind? One word, apparently: *Watchdog*. Goodness, you mean Macca watches it as well?

After last night's fuss, the private arrangement is presumably off and no doubt a special *Watchdog* helpline is to be set up for anybody else suffering from troublesome Beatles lyrics. Any progress there yet, Johnathan Robinson?

It began well enough, with one of those *Watchdog* moments that

Henley, who claims to have several hundred like to sell and a very promising lead from a Yoko in New York, who not only says half the songs are hers but is also having trouble with her new Zanussi washer-dryer...

That, however, was not all we had time for last night. There was something on the old perennial of theatre booking fees and an item about celebrity interviews that, for all Maitland's ingenuity, didn't work because Madonna (yes, she watches it too) behaved impeccably. Not only did she spot the questions he'd written on his hand ("How sweet - I do that too") she politely dismissed his preposterous inquiry about how she was coping with "getting more mature". "It's OK, you can say old", To his credit, Maitland admitted defeat.

We left him on stage at The Half Moon, Putney, pretending to be

REVIEW



Matthew Bond

The Move, purportedly investigating whether ticket buyers have legal redress against old 1960s bands that have no original members in them. As Maitland said: "This is a consumer programme, after all." Next week, Roy Wood says *Watchdog*. Assuming he watches it too.

Unexpectedly, the most fascinating television of the evening came by way of a 20-minute advertise-

ment for the lobbying services of Sir Tim Bell. The riveting story of how Bell and the Communications Workers' Union came together to scupper Michael Heseltine's plans to privatise the Post Office told us about how political lobbying actually works than any of the other talking heads in Michael Cockerell's splendidly absorbing *A Word in the Right Ear* (BBC2).

Telling the story of how Heseltine was effectively mugged by the Tory party's own grass roots was Alan Johnson, the telegraphic general secretary of the CWU. Daniel Harris, the youthful organiser of the union's astonishingly sophisticated campaign and Bell himself, supremely diplomatic to the last. No, he'd never used the phrase "set a thief to catch a thief" when pitching for the business: "Set a Tory to catch a Tory."

The lobbying campaign was far too clever and elaborate to go into

detail here, but what made the programme so watchable was the added subplot. Johnson casually adding that Bell (who reduced his fees for the union) was very much a Thatcherite and, therefore, possibly had a vested interest in humbling Heseltine and Cockerell, chipping in with a timely reminder that if this is what a modern, lobby-wise union could achieve with the Conservatives in office, just think what they might be capable of under Labour.

— chillingly annotating the familiar video footage as he went — far more distressing. Those whom the programme implicitly criticised (but never named) will feel that the oversimplification process went too far. The rest of us will just be grateful for the greater understanding that it delivered, particularly the tragic role played by nearby riffs which, by failing to stop pumping their own oil and gas production, effectively turned Piper Alpha into a giant Bunsen burner. This was restrained, responsible, first-class television.

But no night in 1997 is complete without at least one documentary about the Skeleton Coast of Namibia. Last night's *Survival* (ITV) was the fourth in ten days and there are more to come. Des and Jen Bartlett's contribution was some lovely pictures of Namib desert elephants sliding down sand dunes. I added it to my fast-growing collection.

- ### BBC1
- 6.00am BUSINESS BREAKFAST (13855)
 - 7.00am BBC BREAKFAST NEWS (27233)
 - 9.00am BREAKFAST NEWS (27233)
 - 9.00am ALL OVER THE SHOP (303403)
 - 9.45am KILROY (113855)
 - 10.30am CANT COOK, WON'T COOK (5213)
 - 11.00am NEWS (7) REGIONAL NEWS and weather (543107)
 - 11.05am THE REALLY USEFUL SHOW (873036)
 - 11.45am SMILES PEOPLE with Roy Hudd (873036)
 - 12.00pm NEWS (7) REGIONAL NEWS and weather (702128)
 - 12.05pm INCORPORATING Peter Smith, home the quiz first (525010)
 - 12.30pm CALL MY BLUFF (495555)
 - 12.55pm THE WEATHER SHOW (757113)
 - 1.00pm NEWS (7) and weather (7710)
 - 1.30pm REGIONAL NEWS (4406128)
 - 1.40pm NEIGHBOURS (7) (4980323)
 - 2.05pm FILM: *Columbo* — Now You See Him (1975) starring Peter Falk. A stage magician, starting to murder when he becomes a detective in the black and white film (1324857)
 - 3.30pm PLAYDAYS (598584) 3.50 The Friday Zone (143774) 4.35 Blue Peter Extra (7) (7291229) 5.10 Blue Peter (7) (1092478)
 - 5.35pm NEIGHBOURS (7) (4980323)
 - 6.00pm NEWS (7) and weather (519)
 - 6.30pm REGIONAL NEWS (571)
 - 7.00pm BIG BREAK: Snooker players: Peter Ebdon, Gary Wilson and Mark King. Cue up to help contestants win big prizes (7) (4958)
 - 7.30pm TOP OF THE POPS (7) (855)
 - 8.00pm DAD'S ARMY Classic comedy. Corporal Jones and Private Godfrey and friends are in for a bit of a row when the Home Guard because of their considerable age (7) (7478)
 - 8.30pm NOEL'S TELLY YEARS New series of the nostalgia show in which Noel Edmonds looks back fondly at the TV, radio and features of a chosen year with guests who were very much in the public eye at the time (7) (8219)
 - 8.50pm NEWS (7) and weather (5045)
 - 9.30pm WITNESS WALKS Investigates the battered woman's refuge to find out which of the residents has betrayed the strict secrecy surrounding the place's whereabouts. Starring Patricia Routledge (7) (914381)
 - 10.25pm FILM: *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979) starring Clint Eastwood and Patrick Swayze. Drama based on the true story of a convict's daring attempt to break out of the notorious high-security prison on Alcatraz Island. Directed by Don Siegel (971652)
 - 12.10pm FILM: *The Day of the Triffids* (1962) Howard Keel stars in this adaptation of John Wyndham's novel as one of a small group of able to see after the world's population is blinded and taken over by semi-intelligent plants. Directed by Steve Sekely (742324)
 - 1.45pm WEATHER (2528904)

VideoPlus+ and the Video PlusComes
The numbers next to each TV programme listing are Video PlusCodes. Numbers which allow you to programme your video recorder to automatically record a programme. To use the Video PlusCode, simply enter the number on the Video PlusCode (VPC) and Video PlusComes are trademarks of General Development Ltd.

- ### SKY1
- 6.00am Morning Mail (20581) 6.00am Designing Women (75403) 6.30am Desperate Housewives (21135) 7.00am Top of the Pops (8201) 7.30am The Simpsons (10538) 8.00am The Simpsons (10538) 8.30am The Simpsons (10538) 9.00am The Simpsons (10538) 9.30am The Simpsons (10538) 10.00am The Simpsons (10538) 10.30am The Simpsons (10538) 11.00am The Simpsons (10538) 11.30am The Simpsons (10538) 12.00am The Simpsons (10538)
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